

The Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee

Luke 18:10-14

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (KJV)

The present Gospel is a lasting lesson in humility. The publican recognized his personal sinfulness. He turned to the Lord God for mercy. The publican realized the need for change within himself.

The publican's demeanor reflected dissatisfaction with his sinfulness. He did not approach God with great pride about what he had done. The publican did not present himself as being better than the Pharisee.

The Church has begun the move toward Great Lent and the journey to Pascha. The present Gospel prepares believers to focus more intensely on personal sinfulness.

Continued repentance is needed throughout life for believers to travel the narrow path to God's Kingdom and Eternal Life. Repentance involves rejecting all in life that is not of Jesus Christ.

Each person is responsible for the life, gifts and talents given by God. The use of life, talents and gifts from God determine if the believer faithfully lives in Christ and travels the path to God's Kingdom.

The Church Year is structured to facilitate growth in Jesus Christ. The Church nourishes and guides believers from birth to departure from earthly life to life eternal.

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is a guide post on the journey to God's Kingdom. This Sunday believers are challenged to look deep within themselves to see if they are traveling the narrow path.

When a believer becomes prideful, is boastful about the self and looks down on others, the soul is in peril. Danger exists when the believer like the Pharisee strays from the humility exemplified in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Living in Christ requires constant personal assessment. Action is necessary to guard the heart, mind and soul to keep out negative influences. The publican knew his soul was polluted. He acted by turning to God.

The Pharisee was prideful and content. The Pharisee did not see the need for personal change. He had a very high opinion of himself. The Pharisee's favorable view of himself included an unfavorable view of the publican.

Parishes are strengthened and improve when all heed the message of the Gospel. Parishes grow and thrive when the Gospel is taken to heart by each parishioner and applied in daily life.

God recognized in the publican his desire for mercy. The Lord realized the publican took responsibility for his sinfulness. The publican's desire for change was healthy.

Life's journey can be very long. Perils appear along the path throughout life. Vigilance is necessary to keep the focus on the Lord. Discipline is necessary to stay on the path to the Kingdom.

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee gives believers the lesson to take corrective action when having departed from the path to God's Kingdom.

God is patient and gentle with believers. The Church slowly but with certainty guides believers through life. Increased attentiveness is necessary to deal with the subtle perils that exist to the soul.

Growth in Christ is expected following baptism and throughout life. Growth in Christ involves the wise use of life and life's talents and treasures. The present Gospel is a form of nourishment to feed hungry souls.

Souls require nourishment throughout life. The Gospel is always nourishing. The Precious Body and Blood of Christ are always nourishing. God provides nourishment in the Church throughout life.

. Thank God for the nourishment always existing in the Church. Thank God for the present Gospel and the guidance provided throughout life. May today's Gospel be widely heeded and faithfully applied.

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Venerable Macarius of Egypt. St. Mark of Ephesus. January 19/February 1, 2026. Father Rodney Torbic