

## The Justified Tax Collector

The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector was addressed to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else (Luke 18:9). In this parable, Jesus contrasts the attitudes of two men who went up to the temple to pray: a Pharisee who was confident in his own righteousness and a tax collector who was deeply aware of his sin. The parable condemns the self-righteous, critical attitude of the Pharisee and commends the attitude of the tax collector who not only recognized his own sinfulness before God but also whole-heartedly depended on God's grace and mercy.

Through this parable, Jesus challenges our assumptions about what it means to be justified before God – a person, who even in the opinion of others is a good and holy person, but in his own mind thinks that he is better and holier than others can never be justified in the eyes of God. Jesus also teaches us what God desires in the heart of a person who prays – no matter how holy or sinless we think we are, we are not without sin, and we must approach God as unworthy sinners. The first letter of John tells us, "If we say, 'We are without sin,' we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, He (God) is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing." (1John 1:8-9)



Jesus concluded, "I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:14) One common trait of the Saints, while they were alive on earth, acknowledged themselves as the worst of sinners.

What is the meaning of "justified" in the context of the parable?

In theological terms, to be "justified" means to be made righteous before God. Jesus, the Eternal Word, became man in order to redeem us from sin and death, and through His Passion, Death and Resurrection, justified sinners before God. In Romans 3, St. Paul speaks of being "justified" through faith; he states: "For

we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law." (Romans 3:28). St. Paul makes the point that justification is a gift that is received only through faith and not through works. Not matter how strictly a person observes the letter of the Mosaic Law, he can never be justified; he can only be justified if he comes to believe in Jesus Christ.

In this parable, however, why did the tax collector go home justified and the Pharisee did not? The tax collector prayed to God in the right way; he was sorry for his sins and he surrendered himself totally to God's mercy. As a result, he was "justified" or "made righteous" before God. On the other hand, the Pharisee prayed to God in the wrong way; he boasted that he was morally superior to others and he looked down upon others. As a result, he was not "made righteous" before God.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). One way of being poor in spirit is to admit that in and of ourselves, we have nothing to offer to God to atone for our sins; but what we can offer is the Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. We become "poor in spirit" when we approach God and plead for His mercy as impoverished beggars. The tax collector beat his breast and prayed, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13) God heard his prayer for mercy and answered it. Does it mean then, that just by saying those words, we will automatically be justified? Of course

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not! A lot of people say those same words casually and half-heartedly. What counts is not just the words but what's in a person's heart. Otherwise, those sacred words will be nothing more than a magic spell.

May this parable constantly remind us of our need for God's grace and mercy. May we be reminded to examine our hearts for any hint of pride or self-righteousness, and may we be inspired to pray always with the humility of the tax collector.

## PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Attention children and parents: We will have Sunday School class on Sunday.

Saturday, Nov. 1 is not a holy day of obligation; however, we will have Mass for the Solemnity of All Saints on Nov.1 at 10:30am in the chapel. We will observe the Commemoration of All Souls on Sunday, Nov.2. You may bring pictures of your deceased loved ones and place them on the remembrance table.

Attention Chinese Cursillo members! We will have our monthly Ultreya meeting on Sunday.

Whether or not you are going to the pilgrimage, all parishioners are invited to write their personal intentions in the Book of Intentions for the pilgrimage to Our Lady of La Leche in St. Augustine, FL. Fr. Bill will offer all the intentions in this book to our Blessed Mother during the pilgrimage. You can find the Book of Intentions in the church foyer.

The 10th year anniversary of the dedication of our church will be on November 19, 2027. We would like all church members to have their picture taken for the 10th year anniversary commemorative parish book. Please sign up with Tommy Puk.

For our iGiveCatholic initiative this year, SUPPORT OUR OUTDOOR PRAYER GARDEN AND RECREATION AREA. We have begun the first phase of a new outdoor prayer garden and recreation area in our church property by clearing the space needed for this small capital improvement project. The first phase includes ground covering, outdoor benches and a gazebo or mini-pavilion, our goal for Phase 1 is \$10,000. There will be additional future phases. When completed, the prayer garden will contain an outdoor Stations of the Cross and a monument to Our Lady of China with engraved commemorative bricks. The prayer garden will provide our parishioners and visitors a sacred outdoor space for group prayer and private meditation, as well as open up opportunities for activities which foster both spiritual growth and community building. Please use the iGiveCatholic envelopes provided.

Prayer List: Gao Aishang, Xie Yannong, Xu Chunmei, Bian Meiyi, Chen Kun, Chen Shupeng, Ni Yufang, Lydia Chen, David Wang, Chen Jianxin, Liang Chenjing and Xu Taicheng.

| Mass Schedule                     | Confessions                       | Bible Study                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Sundays 10:30 AM (Chinese)        | Sundays 9:00-9:30 AM              | Wednesdays 10:00 AM (Chinese) |
| Sundays 2:00 PM (English)         | Tuesdays 2:00-3:00 PM             | Mondays 6:00 PM (English)     |
|                                   | By Appointment                    |                               |
| Mondays 12:00 PM (English)        |                                   | <b>Eucharistic Adoration</b>  |
| Tuesdays 12:00 PM (English)       | <b>Anointing of the Sick</b>      | Sundays 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM   |
| Wednesdays 12:00 PM (Chinese)     | First Sundays after 10:30 AM Mass | Tuesdays 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM   |
| Fridays 12:00 PM (English)        |                                   |                               |
| First Friday 7:00 PM (English)    |                                   |                               |
| First Saturday 10:00 AM (Chinese) |                                   |                               |