



Ask, Father James:

How not to Pray in the House of God (Luke 18:9-14)

In this Sunday's gospel reading, Jesus in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (publican) teaches us how not to pray. Jesus says, two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee asks for nothing but God's appreciative attention and praise for all he has been doing. For his flawless faithfulness every day – paying his tithes, fasting, and saying tons of prayer. The Pharisee concluded his prayer by saying: "God, I thank you that I'm not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. The tax collector on the other hand begs God for mercy on himself a sinner. The tax collector bowed his head, avoids narrating a long list of his own vices and virtues to God, but he names his condition: he's a sinner. He beats his chest and pleads for mercy. Jesus said, I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other" The lesson of the parable is simple: God gave same gift to each: eyes to see the truth about who we really are and power to admit the truth before God and become most fully the persons that Christ calls us to be.

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