

MARCH 26, 2022
Saturday of the 3rd Week of Lent
Hosea 5: 15b-6: 6; Luke 18: 9-14

“GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME, A SINNER.”

Our readings for today emphasized our attitudes toward prayer. What must be the content of our prayers? What are we praying for and the way we must pray? In the First Reading, God looked at the attitude of the people of Ephraim and Judah as superficial in terms of worshipping Him. God said: “What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early.”¹ They were not sincere, and truthful, they worship God without humility and love. God wanted from them a genuine loving action, piously performed and not empty rituals. “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”²

This is also the message of our gospel: God does not look on appearances but in the sincerity of heart. The tax collector bowing his head, with contrite heart asks the Lord for forgiveness went home justified. While the Pharisee looking up, boasting all his ‘accomplishment’, ridicule and look down the tax collector and other people, went home unjustified. “His ‘prayer’ is not accepted. It is not really a prayer at all but a hymn to himself. The tax collector is certainly a sinner; that is not denied. But he knows and acknowledges his sinfulness. He is deeply repentant, and he puts himself totally at the mercy of God. ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner.’ God accepts the prayer of the second one because he acknowledges God as his Lord and Saviour. Nor does he compare himself with anyone else. He does not judge anyone else; only himself.”³

¹ Hosea 6: 4 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

² Hosea 6: 6 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

³ livingspace.sacredspace.ie/

The parable gives us both a chance and a warning to look at ourselves. As we know, pride leads to dishonesty, deceit, and spiritual blindness. While true and genuine humility helps us to see ourselves who we really are in God's eyes and persuades us seeking God's compassion and help. God said "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also, with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite"⁴ My brothers and sisters, God dwells only to those with a humble heart, recognize their own wickedness and acknowledge God's saving grace. He will never hear our prayer if we are boastful and despise others' weakness and sinfulness.

So, my brothers and sisters, it is not only how many novenas, rosaries, masses we attended or the prayers we pronounce that count most, they are all important, but also our love which is genuine shown in our lives and share to people around us. Our prayers founded in love and humility must be the reflection of our way of living, our daily lifestyle, and our way of treating others. Like the tax collector, let us say 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'

⁴ Isaiah 57:15 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society