

FAMILY GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 18:9-14

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee begins a preparatory period of four Sundays that lay the foundation for our Lenten journey. Even before Great Lent begins, we enter the Triodion period. The Triodion, which literally means “three odes,” is the liturgical book used during the Lenten period.

In the simple but powerful Gospel of the Publican and the Pharisee, humility is laid before us as the first and most important virtue in our journey to heaven. We, too, need to call upon God for His mercy and be watchful that any spiritual gains we experience are by the grace and love of God. The passage tells us that Jesus shared this parable for those who trusted in themselves. As Christians, we are called not to be obedient to our own will but to be obedient to God’s will for our lives. Obedience leads to humility. This is especially important to remember as we live in a world that views humility as a weakness. If we humble ourselves before God and surrender our will to His, we will then experience true strength.



For Consideration

- How did the Pharisee pray? What does it mean for someone to exalt himself or herself? How do we exalt ourselves?
- How did the Publican pray? What does it mean for someone to humble himself or herself? How do we humble ourselves?
- Why is Jesus telling this parable? What does this Gospel passage mean for our lives?

TO DO TOGETHER

Simon Says

Humility comes from obedience to God. Use this simple but fun game as a family to begin discussing obedience. The leader, "Simon," tells the players what to do by saying, "Simon says, touch your nose. Simon says, hop up and down," etc. The leader then tries to trick people by giving directions that are not proceeded with, "Simon says." Should any players follow this instruction, they are out of the game. The last person standing wins for their attention and obedience to Simon. Do several rounds with different family members leading. When you are done, discuss how obedience leads to humility.

Media Watch vs. Real Life

Challenge your children to spend the next week trying to find three examples of humbling oneself and three of exalting oneself in the media, be it television, film, music, or even the Internet. Then, have them find three examples of each in their daily lives. Have everyone share and discuss which is valued more in today's popular culture.

Prayer of St. Ephraim

Begin learning the Lenten prayer of St. Ephraim with your family. Make it a daily practice as we approach the Lenten season. The prayer follows: *Lord and Master of my life, do not give me the spirit of laziness, idle curiosity, love of power, and vain talk. || But grant me, Your servant, the virtues of moderation, humility, patience, and love. || Yes, Lord and King, allow me to see my own faults and not to judge my brothers and sisters. For you are blessed now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.* Make sure that everyone understands all the words in the prayer. When praying after each stanza, teach your children to make a prostration by doing their cross and either bowing and touching the floor with their hand or doing a full prostration by going down on their knees and touching their forehead to the ground.

CLOSING PRAYER

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Both now and forever, Amen.

In days of old, humility exalted the Publican who cried aloud, lamenting, "Be merciful," and he was justified. Let us all follow him example, for we have fallen down in sin. Let us cry to the Savior from the depths of our hearts: We have sinned, be merciful, You who alone loves mankind.

-from the Vespers of the Publican and the Pharisee

FINAL THOUGHT

Years ago, a 10-year-old boy approached the counter of a soda shop and climbed on a stool. "How much is an ice cream sundae?" he asked the waitress. "Fifty cents," she answered. The boy reached deep in his pockets and pulled out an assortment of change, counting it slowly as the waitress grew impatient. "Well, then, how much would just plain ice cream be?" he asked. Really irritated by the time the boy was taking, the waitress coldly replied, "Thirty-five cents." Again, the boy slowly counted his money. "May I please have some plain ice cream?" He gave the waitress thirty-five cents and she brought him ice cream, glad to finally be done with him. Later, after the little boy left, she returned to clear the boy's dish, and when she picked it up, she stopped. There on the counter the boy had left 2 nickels and five pennies. She realized the young boy had enough money for the sundae, but wanted to have enough to leave her a tip.

-Author Unknown

