

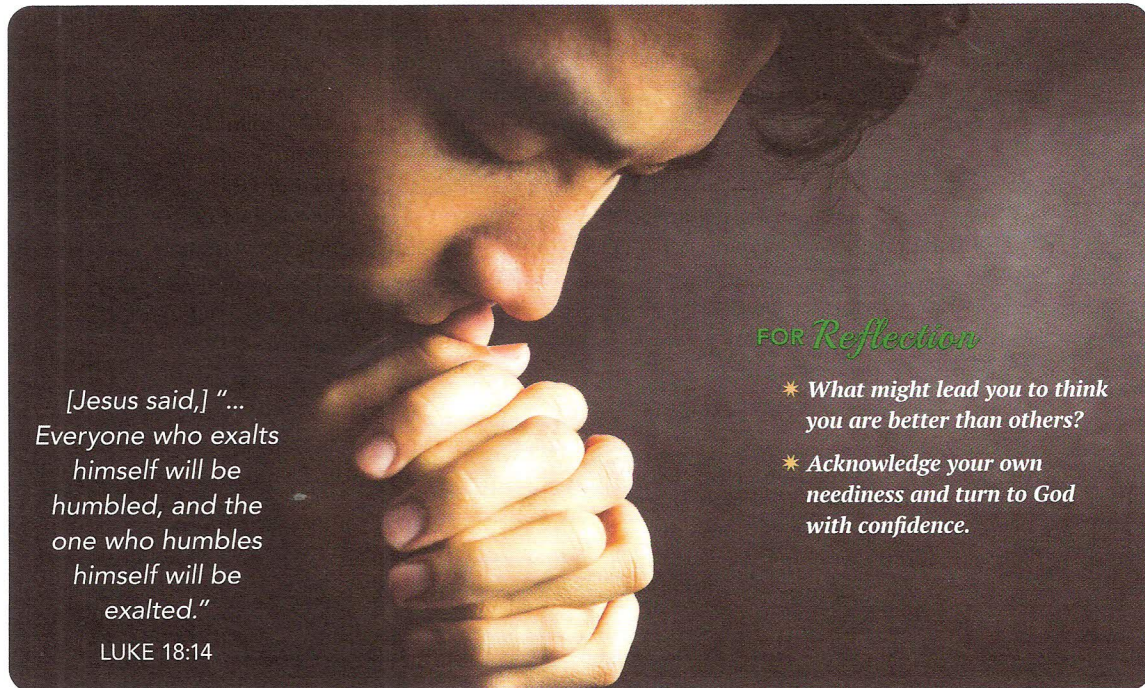
Thank You that I am Better than Others

The words of the Pharisee in today's Gospel might look like a prayer of thanksgiving. However, it is not a prayer, nor does it express gratitude. It is an arrogant statement of self-congratulation. One might think that he had a right to boast. After all, he did observe certain religious obligations and refrain from forms of public immorality. Why did Jesus say that he was not justified?

First, he haughtily presented himself in the temple as a prayerful man. As we saw last week, the fundamental character of prayer is acknowledgement of human neediness and a trust in God's loving care. This man did not see himself as needy or requiring God's care. Second, he did not realize that as important as religious observance and good works might be, they are not requirements fulfilled to earn God's love. Rather, they should flow from one's inner relationship with God. Third, he judged the inner disposition of others by observing the outer circumstances of their lives.

On the other hand, Jesus praised the tax collector. Why? First, he acknowledged he was a sinner in need of God's mercy. After all, as tax collector, he worked for the hated Romans who occupied the land. Most likely he made his own living by adding a commission to the taxes he collected from others. Second, he made no claim of being righteous and deserving God's mercy. Third, overwhelmed by his own unworthiness, he compared himself to no one. His was genuine prayer.

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA



*[Jesus said,] "...
Everyone who exalts
himself will be
humbled, and the
one who humbles
himself will be
exalted."*

LUKE 18:14

FOR *Reflection*

- * *What might lead you to think you are better than others?*
- * *Acknowledge your own neediness and turn to God with confidence.*

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