

**The story is told about a wife who made a frantic call to her husband and said: “Honey, I found out that our maid left this morning, with my favorite towel.”**

**“Which one?” the husband asked.**

**“The one we took from the hotel where we stayed last weekend, remember?”**

**In today’s Gospel (Lk. 18, 9-14) Jesus warns us against self-righteousness. People who think of themselves as better or holier than others need to work on Humility. The truth of the matter is, we are all members of the human race; and the bottom line is, we are all sinners in need of God’s mercy and redemption.**

**I once heard a story about a “man who always found fault with everyone, and especially his wife. She could do nothing right. One morning she asked what he wanted for breakfast. He said: I want some O.J., coffee, bacon, toast, and 2 eggs, one fried, one scrambled. She worked hard to prepare the best possible meal, set it on the table, then waited for his approval. He looked at the meal and said; you’ve done it again; you scrambled the wrong egg.**

**The Pharisee in the parable was like that man. Nobody except him could do anything right. “I thank you that I am not like the rest of men grasping, crooked, like this miserable tax collector.**

**The man who went home from the temple justified was the tax collector, the one who recognized his sinfulness and asked for god’s mercy.**

**When we read the parable, we usually identify with one of the characters depicted in the story. If I were to ask you with whom in this story you most easily identify, you would probably say the tax collector. But it also means we think we are more like him than we are like the Pharisee. And that is something we need to question. If most of us are like the tax collector, there would be no point in Jesus telling this story. He is suggesting, ever so subtly, that maybe we are sometimes very much like the Pharisee.**

**It happens that we are scandalized when others do bad things, but it can also happen that we are doubtful or unbelieving when others do good things. In both instances, knowingly or unknowingly, we are guilty of self-righteousness.**

**It is wrong to think that going to heaven is a race or a contest. It is doubly wrong for anyone to think that going to heaven is the exclusive right of the righteous. If on earth we can bribe our way through almost anything, not so in heaven. We cannot buy heaven, we cannot claim heaven. What then is the ticket to heaven? Humility. Let us all do our very best, and trust with all Humility in God's mercy and love.**

**If you look at the lives of the saints, there are no proud saints. Proud and self-sufficient people cannot qualify for the kingdom of God precisely because they are too proud to accept their faults and admit their brokenness. So, along with Humility, the other key we**

**all need in our spiritual life is Honesty. With Humility and Honesty, one can't go wrong.**

**When was the last time you made a good confession? When was the last time you said to God in all Honesty and with all Humility: "Lord, I am really sorry, have mercy on me, a sinner"? If you have not done that for a long time now, then maybe it is time to do just that, and acknowledge your need for God.**

**There are two kinds of people who refuse to go back to God in repentance: Those who think of themselves as hopeless sinners and unworthy of God's forgiveness; and those who think of themselves as righteous who don't need God's forgiveness.**

**A university professor who went to see a holy hermit and asked to be enlightened. The holy man began to serve him tea. He filled the guest's cup and then kept on pouring so that the tea was soon dripping unto the floor. Watching the overflow, the professor said: "Stop! It is full. No more will go in."**

**"Like this cup," said the hermit, "you are full of your own opinions, preconception, and ideas. You cannot be taught unless you first empty your cup."**

**Emptying one's cup would mean humility to listen to people's advices instead of presuming you know everything. A person who is full of himself is actually denying the possibility of growth in his life.**

**Like the Pharisee and the tax collector we too have come to God's house to offer worship and prayers.**

**Like them we too hope to go home at the end of this service reconciled and at peace with God. Then let us learn from the tax collector the secret of worshipping in a manner that is acceptable to God. Firstly, we should not listen to other people or even to our own consciences when they tell us that God is so angry with us that He cannot possibly forgive us. Secondly, we must acknowledge our sinfulness and entrust ourselves to the generous mercy of God which is bigger than any sins we might have committed. Finally, we promise God to never to look down on our fellow sinners but to help them in their search for God, just as the tax collector is helping us today in our search for God. Remember, God always opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**