

**Liturgy of the Word with Children**  
**30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C**  
**26 October, 2025**  
**Luke 18:9-14**

### **Catechist Background**

Although tax-collectors are not popular these days, in Jesus' time they were considered the scum of the earth, as they were Jews who collaborated with the Roman occupiers. Not only did they finance the Roman regime, but they dealt in graven images (i.e., coins with Caesar's face on them), and practised extortion. In contrast, Pharisees were good Jewish role models (but it is hard to see this from the way they were represented in the Gospels). Not only did Pharisees keep the Jewish Laws, but they went beyond them. They fasted more often and more severely than the Law required (some days they didn't even drink water) and they exceeded the tithing regulations.

The problem with the Pharisee in this Gospel passage isn't with what he *did*, but his *attitude* to God. He was probably honest in his accounting of his deeds, but delusional in his belief that his actions bought him favour with God in preference to those he thought were sinners. Today's first reading reminds us that God loves everyone and wants all people to be enveloped in love. The Gospel reading today doesn't say that the tax collector's lifestyle was acceptable (or that the Pharisee's devotions were bad). It does show that the tax collector was more aware of his dependence on God's help and mercy than the Pharisee was, and that this is what God wants.

### **Setting the Scene**

For the activity described below you will need a large glass (or if you have a large group, a glass jar might work quite well), pebbles (or something similar), and a stone which is labelled 'God'.

### **We Say Sorry**

*Leader:* Lord God, you came to teach us how to live, Lord have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

*Leader:* You show us how to be generous, Christ have mercy.

**All: Christ, have mercy.**

*Leader:* You are always ready to show forgiveness, Lord have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

### **Gloria**

### **We Pray (1)**

God, give us faith, hope, and love so that we can live how you want us to live. Amen.

### **Gospel Intro**

Tell the children who the Pharisees and tax collectors were in the ancient world so the Gospel story makes sense, (or ask them to explain this to each other, and fill in any gaps they leave).

### **Gospel Acclamation**

**Gospel:** Luke 18:9-14

### **Reflecting on the Reading with Children**

- Imagine you were thirsty, which of these two ways would be the politer way to speak to your parents:
  - [gently] 'If you are not busy, please could you get me a glass of water?' or
  - [demanding], 'I hung up my coat so get me a glass of water now!'
- Imagine you knew someone called Joe who said:
  - 'I am great at swimming and dancing, and I'm better at everything than everybody else,'
  - Would it be easy or hard to be friends with Jo? (probably quite hard)

- Imagine you knew someone called Nick who did something wrong and then said:
  - 'I am sorry I did that, and I wish I could change what I did. Will you help me do better in the future?'
  - Would it be easy or hard to be friends with Nick? (probably quite easy)
- Think about these two people (Jo or Nick) and their different ways of talking. Now think about how the Pharisee in our Gospel reading today spoke to God?
  - Which of the two people – Jo or Nick - is more like the tax collector? (Jo - bragging)
- Is it easy for someone who thinks they are better than everyone else to have friends?
  - Could the Pharisee really be friends with God if he thought he was better than everyone?
  - What should the Pharisee have done to help him understand God and to be like Jesus?

## Response

As they watch, fill a glass with pebbles (or sand or beans or whatever you have handy);

- Say: this glass represents the Pharisee's heart: it is full of his own importance.
- Is there room for anything else in there? (No, of course not).
- Produce a stone labelled 'God.'
  - Can God fit in the Pharisee's heart? No, it is already full.
- Tip the pebbles out, and put 'God' in first.
  - This is like the tax collector's heart – God is at the centre and there is room for pebbles.
- God does love the Pharisee, but the Pharisee doesn't want to make room for God in his heart
  - This makes it hard for the Pharisee to accept God's love.
- Depending on the age of the children, you may wish to give each child a pebble to take home, to remind them to place God first in their lives.

## We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children by asking these questions and inviting the children to reply, 'I do.'

- Do you believe in God who makes us all?
- Do you believe in Jesus, who came to save everyone, including 'sinners'?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to live like Jesus?

## We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying, 'Like the tax collector, we remember that you, Lord, are the greatest and so we also now pray...'

*Leader:* We pray for priests and bishops. May they recognise their duty to lead others in the love of God. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

*Leader:* We pray for leaders in our world. May they remember that they are not as important as God. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

*Leader:* As the weather gets colder, we pray for those who do not have a warm place to live. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

*Leader:* We pray for anyone we know who is feeling bad about something they have done. May they understand that God always loves them. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

*Leader:* Lord, help us to remember that we are your children and you are our God, looking out for us. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**