

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

[1] Council of Trent

[2] Fr. John Hardon, S.J., Modern Catholic Dictionary

[3] *The Order of the Mass I*

[4] Saint Therese of Lisieux

[5] Matthew 5:7

[6] Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D.; *Divine Intimacy*; page 779

[7] Blessed John Paul II the Great; *Veritatis Splendor*; 104:2 and 105:1

[8] Pope Paul VI

[9] Saint John Vianney

[10] Fr. John Hardon, S.J., Modern Catholic Dictionary

[11] CCC - 1257

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Gospel Reading – Luke 18:9-14 – Daily Roman Missal

Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. “Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity – greedy, dishonest, adulterous – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.’ But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’ I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Spiritual Reading

From Saint Ambrose of Milan; Bishop and Doctor

What then is man, if you do not visit him? Remember, Lord, that you have made me as one who is weak, that you formed me from dust. How can I stand, if you do not constantly look upon me, to strengthen this clay, so that my strength may proceed from your face? *When you hide your face, all grows weak* (Psalm 104:29); if you turn to look at me, woe is me! You have nothing to see in me but the stain of my crimes; there is no gain either in being abandoned or in being seen, because when we are seen, we offend you. Still, we can imagine that God does not reject those he sees, because he purifies those upon whom he gazes. Before him burns a fire capable of consuming our guilt (Joel 2:3).

Made right with God - Lesson and Discussion

“I tell you, the latter went home justified”

Just as the two men in today’s Gospel (the Pharisee and the tax collector) have different prayers that they present to God, they also have different views of the sins they have committed. Jesus says the tax collector “went home justified”. Both men were sinners, but it was only one man that recognized his sin.

What is justification? “Justification is the change from the condition in which a person is born as a child of the first Adam into a state of grace and adoption among the children of God through the Second Adam, Jesus Christ our Savior”[1] Through the merits of Jesus Christ, we become a new creation, we become sons and daughters of God and have the privilege of calling God, “Abba, Father”. The Catholic Church identifies five elements of justification.[2]

What is the Primary Purpose of justification? The honor of God and of Christ. As sons and daughters of God, our primary goal is to give honor and glory to God. It is at the height of the Eucharistic Prayer, during the Mass, that the Priest “takes the chalice and the paten with the host and, elevating both, he says: Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever.”[3]

What is the Secondary Purpose of justification? The eternal life of mankind. “Let us go forward in peace, our eyes upon heaven, the only one goal of our labors.”[4]

What is the cause, the reason of our being made right with God? The Mercy of God. It is that simple, He loves us and shows us mercy, even when we don’t deserve it.

What is the instrument of our Justification? The sacrament of Baptism.

What constitutes Justification? God’s justice. He, who is just, makes us just.

What can we do to repay Him? We can do nothing to repay what He paid, but we can show thanksgiving and give Him glory. One way we can do this is by living out the beatitude, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”[5] “We are not justified by our virtues and our good works, but by grace and charity, which the Holy Spirit diffuses in our hearts, ‘according as He will,’ yes, but always in proportion to our humility.”[6] We cannot become self-justified, believing that we can do no wrong or that our sins are trivial and even excusable. “The tax collector might possibly have had some justification for the sins he committed, such as to diminish his responsibility. But his prayer does not dwell on such justifications, but rather on his own unworthiness before God’s infinite holiness: ‘God, be merciful, to me a sinner!’ The Pharisee, on the other hand, is self-justified, finding some excuse for each of his failings. Here we encounter two different attitudes of the moral conscience, of man in every age. The tax collector represents a ‘repentant’ conscience, fully aware of the frailty of its own nature and seeing its own failings, whatever their subjective justifications, a confirmation of its need for redemption. The Pharisee represents a “self-satisfied” conscience, under the illusion that it is able to observe the law without help of grace and convinced that it does not need mercy. All people must take great care not to allow themselves to be tainted by the attitude of the Pharisee, which would seek to eliminate awareness of one’s limits and of one’s own sin.”[7]

In what ways do we eliminate the awareness of our own sin? “The loss of the sense of sin is the greatest sin of the century.”[8] We have even begun to believe that sin does not exist, that everything is relative. We must remember that a sin is a sin. Sin is a deprivation of good and it is an offense against God. A thought, word or deed can be called a sin, if it is a deprivation of good and an offense against God. This is

black and white, wrong or right. What we do not know for sure and perhaps only God can know is the intent and circumstance in which a sin was committed. We can judge a thought, word or deed. We might not always be able to judge the intent and circumstance in which the thought, word or deed is committed. We must be honest with our self. “We will either accuse ourselves or excuse ourselves.”[9] The Pharisee, excused himself, the tax collector accused himself.

In what ways do we convince ourselves of our own righteousness, make excuses for our sin? In the book *Quiet Strength* former NFL coach Tony Dungy in his first head coaching job, took on the job of re-making a broken team. His team could have had a laundry list of excuses, but they followed by the simple rule: “No excuses, no explanations.” We can be broken in our sin and it is our excuses and explanations of our sins that keep us broken.

What is really happening to us when we are justified, when we are made right with God? The Justice of God, He is making us just through sanctifying Grace. This is why when we commit a mortal sin after being justified, we are no longer in the state of Grace; thus, are no longer justified or made right in the sight of God. “Adults who have sinned gravely after being justified can receive justification by sacramental absolution or perfect contrition for their sins.”[10] When we commit any sin, but especially grave sin, we should make a good or perfect act of contrition. Perfect contrition does not take the place of sacramental confession but rather prepares us for sacramental confession. When we have committed a serious sin and have made an act of contrition, we should seek sacramental confession as soon as we are able and abstain from receiving the Eucharist.

“God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.”[11] **What does it mean the Sacraments are binding, but that God is not bound by His Sacraments?** Just as God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, He has bound absolution, the forgiveness of personal sin after baptism, to the sacrament of Confession. God, however, is not bound by his sacraments, which means He can still absolve those who either are unable to go to sacramental confession or those who to know fault of their own do not know of the sacrament.

Who can be justified? Everyone. An infant is justified by baptism and the faith of the one who requests or confers the sacrament. Adults are justified for the first time either by personal faith, sorrow for sin and baptism, or by the perfect love of God, which is at least an implicit baptism of desire. This means that at some point an adult who was baptized as an infant must choose their faith personally, live out their baptismal vows. Those who are not baptized must have sorrow for sin and be baptized. Those who do not know of baptism but have a perfect love of God, are saved by what is called baptism of desire. Those who have not been baptized but die for Christ as a martyr, are saved by what is called baptism of blood.