

**Humility versus Pride**    Third Week of Lent    Saturday, March 10, 2018    8:15 AM  
Hos 6:1-6;    **Lk 18:9-14**    (Thank God for blessings, virtues, goodness, and holiness, but do not claim them for oneself because when we do that, we create a sense of separation.)

**“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”**

**This theme is found quite often in the New Testament.** “Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This publican was poor in spirit; it’s another way of talking about humility. It’s another way of talking about reality. Jesus also said, “It is more difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.”

Now this Pharisee was rich in that sense. So very often what is referred to in the New Testament isn’t necessarily what we might think. **Here it is a sort of pride, but it’s a sort of false pride that is the riches that is holding this Pharisee back.** It’s not that he was actually a bad person. He wasn’t a bad person. He wasn’t dishonest, greedy or adulterous; we can take that for granted. But **he made “this prayer to himself.” He was taking credit for his goodness,** which is not a good idea.

**Virtue really comes from God.** Wisdom comes from God. And **we can rejoice in it without taking credit for it.** And so the key is he “spoke this prayer to himself.” Well indeed who could honestly pray this way to God? Rather when we pray to God we thank God for all our blessings and our virtues and our goodness and our holiness. **Thank God for that, but do not claim it for oneself because when we do that, we create a sense of separation,** which is the opposite of God’s plan for us. It’s toward unity. It’s toward communion, not toward separation, not toward distancing ourselves from others.

That’s why it started out here: **“to those who are convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else,”** not only convinced of their own righteousness, but also despised

everyone else. **This is separation.** This is building walls. **Jesus was totally against walls,** even the most famous wall between Jew and gentile that, as St. Paul says in Ephesians, “he broke down through his own blood. So Jesus is about breaking down walls between individuals and communities, between whole communities. **He is about bringing things together. In order to come together we have to surrender our own self-centeredness upon which is built our self-will and our self-love.** We have to surrender that and become centered in God, thanking God and being grateful truly for all the gifts including our virtuous gifts. That way we can go home holy and justified.