

Father O'Connor's Homily for 26 October 2025
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time [C]

Sirach 35: 12-14, 16-18
2 Timothy 4: 6-8, 16-18
Luke 18: 9-14

There is a story – and it is just a story – about a woman who went to Confession. She confessed a few of her “imperfections,” and then went on at great length about her husband’s mountain of serious failings.

When she finished, the priest said to her: “Madam, for your sins your penance is to pray three Hail Marys. And for your husband’s sins, your penance is to pray ten rosaries.”

And that is the spirit of today’s Gospel. The Pharisee went to the front of the temple and began to pray proudly and loudly, reminding God of just how good he was, and how rotten everyone else was, especially the tax collector in the back.

The tax collector, with his head bowed, beat his breast and said, “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

And Jesus said that the tax collector went home right with God, while the Pharisee did not.

How weak will you allow yourself to be for Jesus Christ? Or, to put it another way, how much control are you willing to surrender to allow Jesus to take charge of your life?

A writer coined the phrase, “the gift of inadequacy.” We all can feel inadequate in life: wondering if we are up to the task, fearful that someone will find out how inadequate we feel. Yet this author talks about inadequacy as a gift. That realizing my own inadequacy leads me to depend upon the strength that only God can provide. As the hymn puts it:

I need Thee, O I need Thee.
Ev'ry hour I need Thee.
O bless me now, my Savior,
I come to Thee.

[Author \(refrain\): Robert Lowry \(1872\); Author: Annie S. Hawks \(1872\)](#)
[Tune: NEED \(Lowry\)](#)

<https://youtu.be/E9JHj0gl1Rk?si=5nCQ5BUtZNbkKOcY>

A woman always believed that God had called her to be a teacher. But, as she became more involved at school, she felt that she was accomplishing less, and was enjoying very little anymore.

She discovered the reason: she was increasingly relying upon herself and forgetting about God in her life.

So she began every day by praying for her students, their families and the school faculty and staff. She asked the Lord to teach her students through her. And she began finding that she was becoming more effective as a teacher, that her relationships with others were growing richer and that she was happier in her calling. And how did this happen? She had accepted “the gift of her own inadequacy.”

The Pharisee looked respectable. He probably would have been a fine committee member: he got things done. He believed in God, and he thought that God couldn't possibly do without him. The Pharisee had no place for “the gift of his own inadequacy.”

The tax collector knew that he was a great sinner. He had regularly overcharged fellow Jews and then pocketed the surplus. Now in the temple he bowed his head and admitted his own inadequacy. He prayed, “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

The tax collector went home right with God. The Pharisee went home full of himself.

There is a story about a professor who had to leave the university because of a personal scandal that he admitted to. And he continued to go to his church on Sunday as he always had.

At the coffee and donuts social after Mass, Miriam went up to the pastor and said to him, “Well, I certainly was surprised to see you-know-who here this morning.”

And the pastor replied, “We are lucky to have him here. We need him.”

To which Miriam replied, “I beg your pardon, Father?”

The pastor then responded with his pulpit voice for everyone to hear, “We are lucky to have him here, Miriam. In every church we need at least a few sinners. Because it says in Scripture, ‘I have come not to call the self-righteous but sinners.’ And, Miriam, You-Know-Who said that.”

How weak will you allow yourself to be for Jesus Christ? Or, to put it another way, how much control are you willing to surrender to allow Jesus to take charge of your life?

As Pope Francis reminded us, “The Church is not a museum for saints. It is a hospital for sinners” who want to grow stronger in Christ. “The gift of inadequacy” makes this growth possible: when we admit our need for God.

“O God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” And God is ready and willing to do so – for those who will accept “the gift of their own inadequacy.” And are weak enough, and humble enough, to allow Jesus to take charge of their lives.