

Personal Notes  
041024 Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time 150C  
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By offering negative examples of how not to pray, these Lectionary readings teach the Faithful how to pray. The setting is the daily Tamid offering.<sup>1</sup> Because the original audience would have realized that both the prayer of the Pharisee and the prayer of the tax-collector are caricatures of what would be expected from either, Luke had some explaining to do. From the Greek, Luke uses seventy-six words for the narrative and a further forty-one words of explanation. This fact hints that Luke is interpreting what happened.<sup>2</sup>

In the original well-known event, Jesus did approve of the prayer of the tax-collector, but Luke thought his audience would not understand why Jesus approved. Luke chose to explain that Jesus was explaining away the importance of the physical temple at Jerusalem as the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is in the hearts of the Faithful.<sup>3</sup>

Because both prayers are self-centered, both prayers are unacceptable. Both prayers entertain three false assumptions: God's welcome is (1) restricted, (2) conditional, and (3) holds public offenders at arm's length. The point of the parable becomes the willingness of God to accept even the faulty prayer of the tax-collector.

In this Gospel, Luke portrays God as difficult to reach with a proper prayerful attitude. Luke stands on his own to challenge the early Christian insistence on bold and confident access to God.<sup>4</sup> Luke establishes prayerful access in a context of bungled prayer. Interestingly, many prayers during the personal, private invocations at Mass are self-centered rather than community centered. People often pray for

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Hamm, S.J., "The Tamid Service in Luke-Acts: The Cultic Background behind Luke's Theology of Worship (Luke 1:5-25; 18:9-14; 24:50-53; Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 2 (April 2003) 224.

<sup>2</sup> F. Gerald Downing, "The Ambiguity of 'The Pharisee and the Toll-collector' (Luke 18:9-14) in the Greco-Roman World of Late Antiquity," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January 1992) 96-97. Uses *toll collector*, rather than *tax-collector*.

<sup>3</sup> F. Gerald Downing, "The Ambiguity of 'The Pharisee and the Toll-collector' (Luke 18:9-14) in the Greco-Roman World of Late Antiquity," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January 1992) 96-97. Uses *toll collector*, rather than *tax-collector*.

<sup>4</sup> F. Gerald Downing, "The Ambiguity of 'The Pharisee and the Toll-collector' (Luke 18:9-14) in the Greco-Roman World of Late Antiquity," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January 1992) 98-99. Uses *toll collector*, rather than *tax-collector*.

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individuals, rather than communities, though prayers for communities are often present. For one non-private, public example, during Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, the Faithful pray for their bishop as an individual, without mention of his diocese as a community.

During the Liturgy of the Word for this Sunday, the Lectionary teaches to center prayer on community rather than self. Self-important emoting is inappropriate. The following negative explanations offer a positive point. As Saint Basil (c. 330-379) the Great, Confessor, Doctor of the Church, Archbishop of Cappadocia in Asia Minor puts it, "in your words let there be no empty pretense, in your singing no excessive sweetness ... In everything refrain from seeking to appear important."<sup>5</sup> The pagan Persius said that private prayers intended to be overheard are likely hypocritical.<sup>6</sup>

From personal observations, the Faithful do struggle with one another when they pray together. Community prayers require unity, with everyone on the same cadence, no one slightly ahead, no one slightly behind, no one emoting over and above the rest. Often, even usually, this common cadence is missing as some of the Faithful do not join in, or even talk to one another, as the rest try to talk with their God.

During his public life, Jesus often went aside to pray alone. He and the Holy Family also often prayed in the temple, with the rest of Israel, both Jew and Gentile. As time would prove, the new temple in which to pray is in the grace of Jesus himself.

Prayer for the forgiveness of sins is another interesting aspect of these readings. In the Gospels, ordinarily, sins are forgiven before they are confessed. In Mark 2:5, confession is explicitly excluded for the paralytic lowered down through the roof. Prior confession only happens once, with Saint Peter (Luke 5:8).<sup>7</sup> The Lectionary explains that there is a relationship between personal sin and the community. Part of the expiation for sin, therefore, is the effort required to pray together.

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<sup>5</sup> St. Basil, Bishop and Doctor, *On Humility*, PG 31, col 525, Homilia 20 in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 366, 372.

<sup>6</sup> F. Gerald Downing, "The Ambiguity of 'The Pharisee and the Toll-collector' (Luke 18:9-14) in the Greco-Roman World of Late Antiquity," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January 1992) 85.

<sup>7</sup> F. Gerald Downing, "The Ambiguity of 'The Pharisee and the Toll-collector' (Luke 18:9-14) in the Greco-Roman World of Late Antiquity," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January 1992) 92-93.

## Sirach 35: 12-14, 16-18

The versification of this passage is difficult. As best as I can tell the differences are as follows:

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	12-14, 16-18
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	15b-17, 20-22a (omits <u>Lectionary</u> verse 18)
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	15b-17, 20-22a (omits <u>Lectionary</u> verse 18)
<u>King James</u> (1611):	Does not include Ecclesiasticus/Sirach
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	12-14, 16-19a
<u>New American</u> (1970):	12-14, 16-19a
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	12-14, 16-19a

Sirach is a synthesis by Sirach of Jewish wisdom and piety.<sup>8</sup> For centuries, the Church knew this book as Ecclesiasticus for its frequent use in the liturgy. The passage used today suits the insight of Luke concerning the reversal of fortunes destiny of the Faithful. *The prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds* (verse 17).

## Psalm 34, 2-3, 17-18, 19, 23

The Lectionary uses Psalm 34 according to the following chart.

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>verses</u>	
33C	208	2-3, 4-5, 6-7	(9a) Lent 4 Comments from March 21, 2004 are reincorporated here.
116B	759	2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9	(9a) Ordinary 19 Comments from August 10, 2003 are reincorporated here.
119B	776	2-3, 4-5, 6-7	(9a) Ordinary 20 Comments from August 17, 2003 are reincorporated here.
122B	789	2-3, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21	(9a) Ordinary 21 Comments from August 24, 2003 are reincorporated here.
150C	925	2-3, 17-18, 19, 23	(9a) Ordinary 30 (Today) I misidentified the Responsorial as 7a elsewhere.
591	1158	2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9	(8) Saints Peter and Paul Comments from June 29, 2003 are reincorporated here.

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<sup>8</sup> Dennis Hamm, S.J., "The Tamid Service in Luke-Acts: The Cultic Background behind Luke's Theology of Worship (Luke 1:5-25; 18:9-14; 24:50-53; Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30)," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 2 (April 2003) 220.

Care for the Sick uses Psalm 34, *Part III: Readings, Responses, and Verses from Sacred Scripture: Responsorial Psalms E God is the salvation of those who trust in him*, page 286 and *Mass for Viaticum: Responsorial Psalms B*, page 324.<sup>9</sup>

Psalm 34 is a wisdom psalm, not caught up “with adoration and stunned silence, with excitement and outrage,” but rather “with reflection and calm strength, with moderation and appreciation for the learning experience.”<sup>10</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., suggests that the Jewish schoolmasters arranged the psalms so that the First Psalm is a wisdom psalm and other psalms, such as this, show gratitude for the ability to learn about knowing God. *Peace*, mentioned in verse 14, though unused by the Lectionary “is not seen as tranquility and order, but rather as the deep commitment to the work of justice.”<sup>11</sup> Such a sense of *peace* has special meaning at the sign of peace following the *Our Father* during the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass.

Psalm 34 is a boast, a witness, and a message that God has saved the psalm singer from his suffering. A change of life occurred. The goal of Psalm 34 is praise, reconciling all with God. The Responsorial, *taste and see* carries the sense of *sample* the goodness of the Lord.<sup>12</sup>

Notice that the Lectionary uses the same Responsorial Antiphon in five of the six places it uses Psalm 34. The Lectionary uses a different Responsorial for Saints Peter and Paul. The antiphon fits well today because it shows the inappropriateness of groveling by the tax-collector.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum: Approved for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1983) 296.

<sup>10</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 180.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph P. Healey, “Peace: OT,” *ABD*, 5, 206 as cited in Mark Allan Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 58, No. 3 (July 1996) 474.

<sup>12</sup> Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalms 60-150: A Continental Commentary, translated by Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress Press: 1961/1978, 1989, 1993), 383-385.

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verse 9a Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Taste and see is a mixed metaphor, something that never bothered me until my professors began complaining about me using mixed metaphors. These are two different senses for reaching God. Bread nourishes all the senses.

Interestingly, Psalm 34 is an acrostic including an intellectual as well as an emotional bent,<sup>14</sup> suited for praying about the prayers of the Pharisee and tax-collector.

The Lectionary uses verses 2 and 3 in each of the six places.

verse 2 I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall be ever in my mouth.

The Faithful are to praise God, not themselves.

verse 3 Let my soul glory in the LORD;  
the *lowly* will hear me and be glad.

Jerome translates *lowly* with *mansueti* in the sense of *easy to get along with*.

verse 4b let us *together* extol his name.

Such togetherness suits the contemplations offered for these readings.

While verses 5-8 that follow are not used on this Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, verses 5-8 do suit the present contemplation. This Psalm is related to the Gospel according to Matthew. An article in the Biblical Quarterly suggests that the theme of *binding and loosing* may infiltrate Matthew's entire Gospel.<sup>15</sup> Psalm 34 has its share of binding and loosing. Binding and loosing refers to reconciliation from sin.

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<sup>13</sup> F. Gerald Downing, "The Ambiguity of 'The Pharisee and the Toll-collector' (Luke 18:9-14) in the Greco-Roman World of Late Antiquity," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January 1992) 83. Uses *toll collector*, rather than *tax-collector*.

<sup>14</sup> Hanan Eshel and John Strugnell, "Alphabetical Acrostics in Pre-Tannaitic Hebrew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000), 443.

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence M. Wills, "Scribal Methods in Matthew and *Mishnah Abot*," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 2 (April 2001), page 247, 248.

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verse 5 I sought the LORD, and he answered me  
and delivered me from all my fears.

verse 7 When the poor one called out, the LORD heard,  
and from all his distress he saved him.

Saint Jerome translates *afflicted* with *pauper*, or pauper or poor. While the Poor Clare nuns may not be *afflicted*, they are *pauper*. Hidden in their monastery, they are heard by God.

verse 8 The angel of the LORD encamps  
around those who fear him, and delivers them.

Psalm 34 expresses a sense of distress.

verse 16a The LORD has eyes for the just

The Lectionary does not use verses 16a or higher here. While the tax-collector is presented as *just*, closer examination of his prayer causes complications, as described below.

Jerome does not have the LORD merely looking on; Jerome forms an identity between eyes and the just. I would translate Jerome, "The eyes of the LORD are over the righteous."

verse 16b and ears for their cry.

Jerome, again, brings about an identity between ears and cry. I would translate Jerome, "His ears are in their clamor."

verse 17 The LORD confronts the evildoers,

Jerome translates this more with a "facing up" or "turning his face toward the evildoers." The Gospel parable does face up to evildoers.

Verse 18 reflects Isa 51:15, "God the protector of the contrite and brokenhearted."<sup>16</sup>

verse 19 The LORD is close to the *brokenhearted*;

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<sup>16</sup> Sue Gillingham, "From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 473.

*Brokenhearted* merits Biblical comparison:

<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	qui contrito sunt corde
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	of a contrite heart
<u>King James</u> (1611):	of a broken heart
<u>Jerusalem</u> (1966):	to the broken hearted
<u>New American</u> (1970)	to the broken hearted
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985)	to the broken hearted

The sense of sorrow for sin suits my understanding better than sorrow for my sorry situation.

verse 20-21 Many are the troubles of the just one,  
but out of them all the LORD delivers him;  
he watches over all his *bones*;  
not one of them shall be broken.

This reference to not breaking *bones* anticipates the crucifixion (John 19:36) where the soldiers do not break the bones of Jesus, because he is already dead. The glory of Jesus is associated with the Cross.

## 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Verse 17, *I was rescued from the lion's mouth* has special meaning for me as a member of the Northampton Lions Club. Saint Paul may be referring to being fed to the lions, literally.<sup>17</sup> The Lectionary readings do encourage the Faithful to pray always, even if their prayers may be badly phrased. God will save them for their very effort.

## 2 Corinthians 5:19

*Reconciliation* suits sorrow for sins, repentance, and prayer in the sight of the Lord.

## Luke 18:9-14

The following two verses, Luke 18:15-17, end what Robert E. Brown calls the "Big Interpolation" begun after Luke 9:50. The interpolation begins with Mark 9:39-40 and ends with Mark 10:13-16 where Luke rejoins the Mark narration.<sup>18</sup> The Church uses this gospel as an option in Pastoral Care of the Sick.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 1 (January 1986) 93.

<sup>18</sup> Raymond E. Brown, S.S., The Anchor Bible Reference Library: An Introduction to the New Testament (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 251, footnote 52.

Verse 9 is about self-righteousness and pride. The Cross, such as the cross of sickness, takes pride out of self-righteousness. While the tax-collector does better than the Pharisee does, neither one combines a contemplation of God with an acceptance of the Cross that Jesus is teaching. The road to Jerusalem in Luke<sup>20</sup> includes a message about how to pray, with both confidence and diffidence. The Pharisee does serve as a negative model “of self-elevating behavior.”<sup>21</sup> As an aside, “it would be inaccurate to say that Luke depicts a gradual escalation of hostility during Jesus’ journey toward Jerusalem.”<sup>22</sup>

The Pharisee and the tax-collector going into the temple to pray, was a normal activity. Jews prayed outside in the “court of the Gentiles” as well as in the sanctuary. There is nothing unusual about the setting for the prayers.<sup>23</sup>

The Greek is *tax-collector* though the main scholarly article on this passage uses *toll collector*.<sup>24</sup> Raymond E. Brown does use *tax-collector*.<sup>25</sup> I suppose that the toll was

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<sup>19</sup> “Part III: Readings, Responses, and Verses from Sacred Scripture,” Gospels, P, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum: Approved for use in the dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and confirmed by the Apostolic See: Prepared by International Commission on English in the Liturgy: a Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops’ Conferences (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1983)

<sup>20</sup> Richard J. Dillon, “Previewing Luke’s Project from His Prologue (Luke 1:1-4),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 1981) 221-222.

<sup>21</sup> John T. Carroll, “Luke’s Portrayal of the Pharisees,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 50, No. 4 (October 1988) 615.

<sup>22</sup> John T. Carroll, “Luke’s Portrayal of the Pharisees,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 50, No. 4 (October 1988) 611.

<sup>23</sup> P. M. Casey, “Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1997) 312.

<sup>24</sup> F. Gerald Downing, “The Ambiguity of ‘The Pharisee and the Toll-collector’ (Luke 18:9-14) in the Greco-Roman World of Late Antiquity,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January 1992) 83, 85, 89, 92-93.

<sup>25</sup> Raymond E. Brown, S.S., The Anchor Bible Reference Library: An Introduction to the New Testament (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 251.

a type of tax. For consistency, I use *tax-collector*, rather than toll collector. Since the Lectionary hyphenates *tax-collector*, so do I, rather than *tax collector*.

The Greek in verse 11, *took up his position*, does not connote pride, because standing was how the Jews and a great part of the early Christian church normally prayed.<sup>26</sup> What does connote pride, however, was that the Pharisee intended to be overheard.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, the mercy for which the tax-collector prays is not the familiar *eleeson* as in Luke 16:24; 17:13; 18:38-39, but an imperative verb “echoing the language of the only passage in the Torah that speaks of the purpose of the daily Tamid, Exod 30:16.” The purpose of the twice-daily Tamid, sponsored by the community as a whole through the temple tax, was offering sacrifice to God. “This [Greek] terminology suggests that Luke would have the reader understand that the tax-collector’s prayer has its focus precisely on the Tamid service as a communal liturgy in an attitude of conversion or *metanoia*.”<sup>28</sup> A focus on self was inappropriate.

At the time of Jesus in the wider Greco-Roman world, on the one hand, “to thank God or gods for one’s own good deeds and virtues would not be thought appropriate.”<sup>29</sup> As Theophylactus (765-840), Patriarch of Bulgaria, on the other hand, reminds the Faithful, Job said many words in praise of himself, and “is crowned with honor.”<sup>30</sup> I note that suffering makes the self-praise of Job acceptable.

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<sup>26</sup> Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., English Edition adapted from the Fourth Latin Edition by Joseph Smith, S.J., Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblico—114—Biblical Greek (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994) 127.

<sup>27</sup> Dennis Hamm, S.J., “The Tamid Service in Luke-Acts: The Cultic Background behind Luke’s Theology of Worship (Luke 1:5-25; 18:9-14; 24:50-53; Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 2 (April 2003) 224.

<sup>28</sup> Dennis Hamm, S.J., “The Tamid Service in Luke-Acts: The Cultic Background behind Luke’s Theology of Worship (Luke 1:5-25; 18:9-14; 24:50-53; Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 2 (April 2003) 224.

<sup>29</sup> F. Gerald Downing, “The Ambiguity of ‘The Pharisee and the Toll-collector’ (Luke 18:9-14) in the Greco-Roman World of Late Antiquity,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January 1992) 85.

<sup>30</sup> “Exposition from the Catena Aurea,” Theophylactus, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 360.

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According to Justinian, the early Christian communities thanked God in their liturgies for being “counted worthy”<sup>31</sup> of the promises of Christ.

In verse 13 the tax-collector is chagrined, like Mary (of Martha and Mary), and asks for the intervention of God.<sup>32</sup>

The lesson from these readings is that the kingdom of God is in the hearts of the Faithful, not any building, such as the temple. Sirach shows that *persona non grata* does not apply to God. *God hears the cry of the oppressed* (Sirach 35:16b). Psalm 34 insists on the ability to *bless the LORD at all times* (verse 2), that is, outside the walls of the temple. When Paul writes in 2 Timothy 4:18, *The Lord will rescue me from every threat and will bring me safe to his heavenly kingdom*, Paul means that death in the Faith renders the kingdom of God safe, finally, in the temple of the soul. The gospel about the Pharisee and the tax-collector is about God-centered prayer emanating from the community, because the kingdom of God is in the hearts of the Faithful as community.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

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<sup>31</sup> F. Gerald Downing, “The Ambiguity of ‘The Pharisee and the Toll-collector’ (Luke 18:9-14) in the Greco-Roman World of Late Antiquity,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January 1992) 89.

<sup>32</sup> Warren Carter, “Getting Martha out of the Kitchen: Luke 10:38-42 Again,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 58, No. 2 (April 1996) 274.