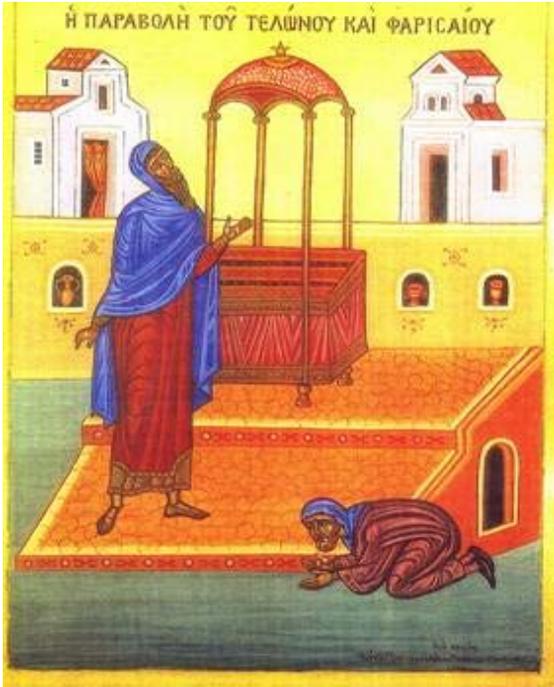


# Dear Brothers and Sisters



The Pharisee's prayer did not help him, while the Publican went home justified.

Two ways of praying, personified in two types of people. The first considered himself upright, better than everyone else, and said his prayer "to himself." The second did not even consider himself worthy to step inside the church, let alone say a prayer, and knelt down in the corner beating his breast, asking for God's mercy.

One considered himself a good guy, the other knew very well who he was, he had his sins in his hands.

All of us are a mixture of Pharisee and Publican, but often times it is the Pharisee who wants to rise up from within.

The word 'Pharisee' is frequently associated with 'hypocrite,' which has negative connotations for us. However, 'hypocrite' was originally a theatrical term. The Greek word 'hypokrisis' meant

'acting on the stage, pretense'. Referring to a character, a role portrayed in a play, it simply meant taking a part on stage: the prince, or the butler, or the maid, or the pauper. Playing a role, the hypocrite wore a mask, (literally or figuratively) to characterize an assumed persona. Once the play was over the mask was taken off.

But the hypocrite, the Pharisee, does not want to take the mask off. In fact, he is unable to, because for him—as Liza Minnelli sang—'Life is a Cabaret.' He lives his life as if on stage, giving a performance for others. Many people live life this way, playing to the audience around them, picking up cues and feedback as to how they are doing, adjusting their persona and behavior accordingly. The sad truth is that the main audience the Pharisee plays to is himself. The Pharisee keeps the mask on, he has to live in a fictitious reality, because real life, his life, is too hard to face. He puts on an act, not wanting to remove the mask, for fear of what lies beneath.

The Good News is that this mask can be removed. Jesus Christ has removed it, and has revealed the true face of man.

Christ reveals that we are loved by God no matter what.

His divinity was eclipsed, and the human face of Christ was revealed on the Cross.

Despised and rejected, considered a blasphemer and a sinner, mistreated and misunderstood. And yet he knows that he is not forsaken by God. God loves him, and in him has loved each of us the way we are.

Without need for pretense, we can be who we really are, and discover that we are loved exactly the way we are. We do not have to justify ourselves, because God justifies us. When our mask is removed, prayer becomes simple, and our relationship with God becomes real; as the Publican found out.

Fr. Sean