

RAISING SAINTS



CHILDREN + FAMILY MINISTRY // WEEKLY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS + PARENTS

Fifth Sunday of Great Lent - Sunday of the Judge

March 15 of this year is the Median day of Lent. We have already walked through the first half of our Lenten journey! The scripture readings throughout lent lead us to reflect on our relationship with God, which was broken because of Adam and Eve's sin of disobedience. The effects of that sin have been transmitted to us, their descendants. We are vulnerable to make choices which are not pleasing to God in the way we relate to ourselves, to others, and yes, even to all of the created world.

This Sunday's reading is from the Gospel of Luke 17:20-18:14. The Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God was coming. Jesus answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." In other words, the reality of God's kingdom is already present to be accepted by people. The Pharisees had in mind a kingdom bringing material benefits. Jesus' invitation to his followers is to live a life of readiness for the fulfillment of God's kingdom. That life of readiness he emphasized was one of prayer, in other words, living a life pleasing to God.

The two parables presented to us on the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent set forth the conditions of prayer most pleasing and acceptable to God.

THE PARABEL OF THE UNJUST JUDGE

LUKE 18:1-8

In this parable we come face to face with what happens frequently in our society. Those who are in positions of power choose to favor the wealthy or people of influence to the total disregard of the poor and powerless. The judge in this parable was one of the paid magistrates appointed either by Herod or by the Romans. These judges were well known for their dishonorable practice of accepting bribes from plaintiffs in order to settle their cases. Whereas, they ignored the poor and the lowly who had no influence. The parable does not liken God to the unjust judge, rather it contrasts him to such a person. Jesus says, "If an unjust judge finally will give justice to a widow who persisted her cause, how much more will God, who is a loving Father, give his children what they need?" Unwavering persistence in prayer is needed. This does not mean that God will

give whatever the child asks for. We know that often we do not receive what we have asked for in prayer simply because God knows what would hurt us and what would be good for us. The message is clear: pray unceasingly. Your faith will never be shaken if you end your prayer with 'Thy will be done' since our loving Father knows what is best for us.

THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR LUKE 18:9-14

This parable depicts attitudes of prayer. Devout Jews observed three prayer times daily, 9 a.m., 12 noon, and 3 p.m. Prayer was considered to be effective if it was offered in the Temple. The Pharisee and the tax collector are portrayed at prayer in the Temple. The Pharisee praised himself and listed all his attributes, contrasting them to others who were there, pointing to the tax collector. "See, how good I am God!" was his motto. The tax collector stood far away in one

corner. He couldn't even raise his eyes to heaven, beating his breast simply said, "O God, be merciful, to me the sinner." Jesus concluded saying, I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

May God enable us to reflect these positive attitudes of prayer to our children as we walk the Lenten journey desirous of becoming more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Note: The material for the children will be presented in three levels in order to make it age appropriate:

Level 1: Ages 5-8 (K-3rd grades)

Level 2: Ages 9-12 (4-7th grades)

Level 3: Ages 13-17 (8-12th grades)

