

## Reflection Questions

- What helps you return to God daily with honesty and humility?
- How does the tax collector's prayer—"God, be merciful to me, a sinner"—speak to your own experience of recovery?
- What does it mean for you to "take up your cross" and follow Christ in the context of your healing from lust?

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## Sunday Mass Readings this Week

**First Reading:** Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 34:2-3, 17-18, 19, 23

**Second Reading:** 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

**Gospel:** Luke 18:9-14

## Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time



When criticized for eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus responded, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners" (Luke 5:31-32). These words remind us that recovery begins when we admit our sickness and open ourselves to the healing grace of God. Our daily return to Him, grounded in humility and honesty, keeps us connected to the hope His mercy brings.

Conversion, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, is an ongoing process: "Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, exercise and defense of justice and right, by admission of faults to one's brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance" (1435).

Step 2—“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity”—calls us to place our faith in God’s ability to transform us. Our part is to cry out honestly and remain willing to let Him heal us. This Sunday’s first reading assures us that God hears the cry of the humble (Sirach 35:15–20):

*The Lord is a God of justice,  
who knows no favorites.  
Though not unduly partial toward the weak,  
yet he hears the cry of the oppressed.  
The Lord is not deaf to the wail of the orphan,  
nor to the widow when she pours out her complaint.  
The one who serves God willingly is heard;  
his petition reaches the heavens.*

Faith invites us to bring our shame, weakness, and woundedness to God rather than hiding them. In recovery, we learn that strength is found in surrender. While the world tells us to lead with our accomplishments, healing comes when we lead with honesty—admitting that on our own, we are powerless.

This Sunday’s Gospel reveals two different attitudes toward prayer and conversion (Luke 18:10–14):

*“Two people went up to the temple area to pray;  
one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector.  
The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this  
prayer to himself,  
'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of  
humanity—  
greedy, dishonest, adulterous—or even like this tax  
collector.  
I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole  
income.'*

*But the tax collector stood off at a distance  
and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat  
his breast and prayed,  
'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.'  
I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the  
former;  
for whoever exalts himself will be humbled,  
and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

When we compare ourselves to others or rely on pride, lust finds a foothold. But when we humble ourselves before God, admitting our powerlessness, His grace enters in. We no longer need to pretend to be righteous; we can be real.

God knows our story better than we do. He sees our failures and our desires, our wounds and our willingness. He doesn’t ask us to be perfect—only to be honest and willing to grow. By taking our own inventory, making amends, and practicing daily surrender, we find freedom and renewal in His mercy.

As we walk this path, we do not do so alone. God travels with us through community, Scripture, and prayer. Each day we humbly follow, one step at a time, discovering that His healing power is greater than our brokenness.