

If the Pharisee had given consideration . . .

. . . to the natural gifts God had given him;

. . . to the recollection of his justice which he extended to his neighbor;

. . . to the recounting of his generosity to the Temple treasury;

. . . to the recalling to mind his successes in warding off temptation;

. . . to his awareness of a life free of adultery,

he might, with truth, have burst into the exclamation: "I am not as other men". On the other hand, had the Pharisee been a true penitent, who, when employed in examining his wretched, sinful conscience and condition, with pain of soul, noting his numerous failings, and truly described himself as the chief of sinners; had the Pharisee been a truly thankful man, a man lost in the multitude of God's mercies; had the Pharisee in simplicity and humility understood that truly none in the world had been so highly favored as he had been - then he would not have incurred the disfavor of his just God! One must read and reread - over and over - the prayer of the Pharisee to sense its viciousness and vile character: "O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men . . . extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican".

In the vaults of the guarded privacies of our mind, have we not - do we not - at times, judge ourselves as being different from the sinners of the world? Have we not - do we not- at times, consider our victories over sin as the result of our own efforts and determination? Have we ever understood that BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD working in us, we would be the worst of street people? Do we realize that we are in no position to place judgment on any man? Have we ever wondered at our own reactions when we are suddenly faced with the vicissitudes and temptations that torture our neighbor?



*Father Prior Sebastian and Father Abbot Leonard*