

**30th Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Sir 35:12-14, 16-18; Ps 34; 2 Tm 4:6-8, 16-18; Lk 18:9-14**

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The topic of today's readings is humility as the essential attitude for a true relationship with God. God keeps the proud at a distance (cf. Ps 138:6; Lk 1:50-53), but draws near to the humble (1 Pet 5:5). God dwells in a high and lofty place, but is with the humble on earth, Is 6:1; 57:15; 66:1-2. In this world, few listen to or take the downtrodden into account: they are the invisible, unheard ones who do not exist, their votes don't count, they have no money to give, no guns with which to threaten or impose. But this is why God takes their side, and why we must fear the last judgment as described by Mt 25: it is by how we treated the "least" of Jesus' brothers and sisters that we will be judged, and rewarded or condemned.

In the gospels, it was the poor and sick, and sinners with a bad reputation, who came to Jesus (and, apparently, to John the Baptist before Jesus, Mt 21:31-32; Lk 7:29-30). It is very dangerous to think highly of oneself, which usually also requires putting others down. Ideally, we should all be affirmed, accepted, loved: in this way, unbalanced, even pathological needs to be applauded and recognized are avoided. In our depersonalized, competitive, often inhuman world, our egos become fragile, easily bruised, and so we compensate with arrogance, inability to accept correction, masks that seek to aggrandize who we are. We want everyone to know how successful we are, we need that external recognition. But it was the publican, aware of his weakness and failure, that had the right attitude for a relationship with God; the Pharisee, full of himself and disdainful of others, spoke words which did not reach God except perhaps in his own deluded head.

Paul, in prison, has been abandoned by all, but has persevered; he can be rightfully satisfied with how he "ran the race." He depends on others and includes them in the reward he awaits; he excuses the ones who deserted him. In his need, the Lord stood by him, and Paul has every confidence that He will bring him safely to the glory of His kingdom.