

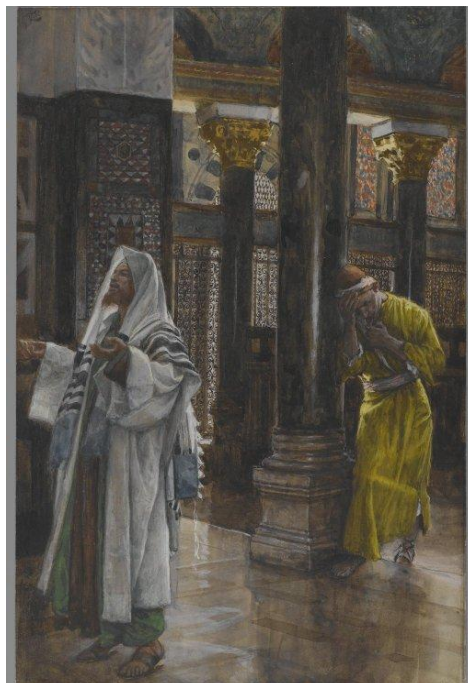
Publication Date: October 21, 2025

Reflection Date: October 26, 2025 - [Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time](#)

God, Be Merciful to Me, a Sinner

The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in the gospel reading for Sunday October 26 (Luke 18:9-14) is addressed to “those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else.” The parable’s message goes further than to simply encourage generic humility. Jesus targets the disdain for others at the core of this particular type of spiritual pride. It is not only the confidence of the Pharisee that is amiss here, but, more deeply, the hatred and disgust it produces and justifies. Today, in our polarized world, we should pay **attention to whether we hold such** attitudes if we wish to be followers of Jesus and St. Francis.

This poisonous religious attitude shares many qualities with xenophobia, disdain for, and even fear of the stranger. It may seem odd for the prideful prayer of the Pharisee to be understood as the product of fear, but it might be the fear of being considered on the same level as the tax collector he noticed at the back of the temple. This reversal allows us to see the true courage in the prayer of the tax collector. Perhaps this is part of why the latter goes home justified and the former does not. The tax collector’s humility allows him to present himself before the Lord with an honesty that the Pharisee, for all his merits, cannot. Furthermore, the sinful tax collector asking for the mercy of God is not led to despise the Pharisee in the way the Pharisee and Jesus’ intended audience despise everyone else.



The Pharisee and the Publican (Le pharisien et le publicain) by James Tissot, 1886-94

In a sense, the faithful legal observance of the Pharisee has become an obstacle that leads him into self-deception and hatred of the world and others. In the same way, there is a sense in which the real sins of the tax collector awaken his conscience with enough self-knowledge to repent and seek mercy. Perhaps the lesson here is that a perfect observance that leads to moral slumber can bear evil fruits like disdain of others, just as the sin that awakens our conscience can bear the good fruit of humility and mercy. I am reminded of Pope Francis who never missed the occasion to profess himself a sinner in need of God's mercy and forgiveness.

In the second reading (2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18), Paul is writing to Timothy. Paul was a Pharisee and his words share some of the characteristics of the Pharisee of the gospel reading's parable. But there is a crucial difference: there is neither disdain nor hatred. Paul's vision of justification is for all. "The Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me," Paul insists, "but to all who have longed for his appearance." Paul wishes no evil even to those who deserted and harmed him, exclaiming, "May it not be held against them!" In many ways, Paul appears as someone who has absorbed the message of this parable.

Can I say the same for myself? I confess that I had to sit with this reflection for a long time and repeat over and over: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." I hope and pray that my prayer, like the one of the widow in the book of Sirach, pierces the clouds and reaches God's ear.

Sister Maria Orlandini, OSF

Director of Advocacy, Franciscan Action Network

Suggested Action: This week, reach out to someone you tend to consider different or unworthy of attention to have a chat. Pray for those with whom you disagree.

Suggested Petitions:

For all of us, that we may be open to God's grace and look at our fellow citizens as neighbors and brothers and sisters.

That we as FAN's Network may be able to witness the gospel values of mercy and forgiveness in our troubled world and country.

Prayer

**God of peace, we bless you and we thank you
because you have sent us your beloved Son, Jesus,
making him the paschal mystery,
the architect of all salvation,
the source of all peace.
Open yet more our hearts to the needs
of ALL our brothers and sisters,
so that we may be better able to build a true peace.**

Remember, Father of mercy, all who are in pain,
who suffer and die in the cause of a more just world.
For the people of every race, of every tongue –
may your kingdom come:
your kingdom of justice, of peace, of love;
and may the earth be filled with your glory.
-St. Paul VI

Amen.

We did it! Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference 2025



The 2025 Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference: *Love in Action*, took place October 18-20 in Washington, D.C. and included 41 meetings with U.S. congressional offices. One hundred forty young adults, students, Franciscans, and advocates for faith-based justice came together for advocacy training, worship, prayer, fellowship, dynamic speakers, and congressional meetings. Keynote speaker C. Vanessa White called for a spirituality that does justice, where we find hope, joy, and the spirit of God, even amidst suffering. Panelists described the impact of our broken immigration system on their own lives and our communities, as well as the conflict in Gaza and efforts to secure a lasting peace. Participants learned about legislation related to these two pressing issues and

received training on how to use a nonviolent, effective approach to communicate and advocate. Moments of fun, connection, and community were interspersed throughout each day of the conference. Yesterday, participants and FAN staff traveled to Capitol Hill to engage in advocacy. After months of preparation and vital support from sponsors and everyone else who made the conference possible, it was exciting and deeply encouraging to hear their stories about the meetings and the overall impact of the conference. Thank you to all the participants, speakers, and contributors for an amazing experience.

Join in Conference Advocacy Today

While the conference has come to an end, the work continues. You are invited to continue advocacy efforts that were the central focus on this year's conference: immigration and Israel/Palestine. Conference participants voted to choose these issues.



Immigration:

Please tell Congress to act with urgency, after returning from this prolonged shutdown, to advance the Renewing Immigration Provisions bills (S. 2468/ H.R. 4696) out of the Judiciary Committees in the House and Senate for a vote.

This bill would create a streamlined path to citizenship for DACA recipients, TPS holders, farmworkers, and undocumented essential workers by amending the Immigration and National Act (INA) which governs the “registry” process (a path to legal status for certain long-term residents). If passed, the bill would update the registry process, giving long-term residents who have lived in the U.S. for at least seven years an opportunity to apply for legal status.

You can act now: [here](#).

Israel/Palestine

Despite the recent ceasefire, Gaza is far from being on a path to a sustainable and just peace. Since taking office, the present Administration has continued the pattern of recent Administrations and approved a series of arms sales to Israel totaling over \$12.5 billion. Independent investigations have found that U.S. weapons have been used in unlawful attacks that killed dozens of Palestinian civilians, including children.

Please join FAN in urging the House of Representative to advance the Block the Bombs Act, H.R. 3565, introduced by Representative Delia Ramirez (IL-3), which would prohibit the President from selling, transferring, or exporting certain defense articles or services, including heavy bombs, to Israel except in specified circumstances.

You can act now: [here](#).

The Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment



Webinar: A Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment

Thursday, Nov. 6, 2025

Time: 7pm ET / 6pm CT / 5pm MT / 4pm PT

Sign up today: [here](#)

Please join us! Learn about the global community's resolve to tackle the climate crisis and preserve our human right to a clean and healthy environment on **November 6, 2025, 7pm ET** (6pm CT / 5pm MT / 4pm PT) in our latest webinar, cosponsored by Franciscans International. FAN's network is invited to spend a year studying this right and seeking to join state-level advocacy efforts to enshrine this right in U.S. state constitutions— via the national Green Amendments Movement. This first webinar

in a series of three (December 2, 2025 and January 2026 events will follow) will focus on the right as defined by the United Nations, upheld by the International Court of Justice, and uplifted by Franciscan communities across the globe.

Franciscan Justice Circles

Thank you to the many FJC members who traveled to DC to participate in our conference! In addition, many FJC members across the country participated peacefully in No Kings events on Oct. 18 (Albuquerque NM, Reading PA, Poughkeepsie NY, Washington DC, Minneapolis MN and more). One FJC member described her participation in the public witness event as “very upbeat and hope-filled” and said she had many conversations about her Franciscan Justice Circle, inviting others to get involved. The **Twin Cities FJC** chose to gather virtually in prayer before heading out to the events, and invited people from other FJCs to join them to ground themselves in the actively loving and ever nonviolent spirit of God.

Members of the **Rochester, NY FJC** continue in their focus and concern on the situation that immigrant families in their community find themselves in, noting deep fear, discrimination and distress. The Circle takes actions in solidarity and support of their community members.

Upcoming [Franciscan Justice Circle](#) (FJC) gatherings:

W. Pennsylvania FJC: Thur. Oct. 23 at 7:30 pm ET via Zoom

Reading, PA FJC: Sun. Oct. 26 at 2:00 pm ET In Person & via Zoom

SE Wisconsin FJC: Mon. Oct. 27 at 7:00 pm CT via Zoom

Twin Cities FJC: Mon. Oct. 27 at 7:00 pm CT via Zoom

Colorado FJC: Mon. Oct. 27 at 7:00 pm MT via Zoom

Bay Area FJC: Mon. Oct. 27 at 7:00 pm PT via Zoom

CT-RI FJC: Tues. Oct. 28 at 7:00 pm ET via Zoom

Texas FJC: Tues. Oct. 28 at 7:15 pm CT / 6:15 pm MT via Zoom

Chicagoland FJC: Sat. Nov. 1 at 10:00 am CT via Zoom

To find out more about any of the [FJC](#) gatherings coming up or for information about joining or forming a Circle, please sign up [HERE](#).