



I believe it's a big part of my ministry to get people to pray. Today we heard the Gospel story about the self-righteous Pharisee. His prayer is hardly a prayer at all - it's rooted in pride, and it's all about how great he is. If you're praying that way ... I hope nobody here is praying that way.

I've worked out a little mnemonic device to help you remember the remedy for the pride that we may be tempted toward in our lives.

"H" is because God wants you to be "happy" ... but He doesn't want you to do whatever you *think* would make you happy. What parent would give their kids ice cream for every meal? You'd have a bunch of sick kids by the end of the day. Doing God's will is what makes us happy - He knows what will make us happy - and living in His will makes us happiest.

God created "U" - that is, "you" with a definite purpose. No one here is an accident. God has a plan for each person. You may have an inkling of what it is, or you may be pretty sure of what that plan is. God's plan often unfolds over time for many of us. But the bottom line is that YOU are important to God, and He didn't create you without any reason or purpose.

The next word is "modesty." The Pharisee in the Gospel reading boasted about his righteousness, and even in prayer - all he could talk about was himself. Modesty is realizing that everybody else doesn't want to hear all about your accomplishments. It also means that you aren't supposed to spend all your time thinking about yourself. Immodesty is thinking, talking, and showing off - looking for your own glory ... as opposed to seeking God's glory in all that we do.

"B" is for "baptism." While we know that God has created each person with a definite purpose, our baptism calls us to be heralds of the Gospel. Each of us are called to live the Gospel and spread the Gospel. Baptism also requires that we live up to the promises we made before we were baptized - or that were made on our behalf. But it's very important that we live up to our baptismal call as well as our baptismal promises.

The "L" should remind us that God is LOVE, and that we are commanded to love God above all things. We need His grace to be able to love God above all things, but with His grace it is very possible. The first half of the 'great commandment' is to love God with your whole heart, whole mind, whole soul, and whole strength. God needs to be number one in our lives - every moment of every day.

"E" is the second half of the 'great commandment' which is to Love God like we just heard ... the next part is that we have to love our neighbor as ourself. The "E" is to remind us that after our love of God, we are called to love "everyone else."

And that's how we can conquer the pride of the Pharisee - by being humble - living in God's will so we can be HAPPY; knowing that YOU are created in the image and likeness of God, and were created with a definite purpose; being MODEST in thought, word, and actions - each one of us may be made with a purpose, but that doesn't mean that it's all about you; living up to the promises and the call of our BAPTISM; to LOVE God above all things; and to love EVERYONE else like ourselves.