

The contemporary Indian teacher, philosopher, and philanthropist, Ravi Shankar - not to be confused with the sitar player of the same name; often says: "Comparison leads to confusion." He never develops this much further, but says it the same way.

In today's Gospel, we hear of the tax collector and the Pharisee.

The Pharisee is so full of himself, and in thanking God, thanks Him for being 'better' than the tax collector. Missing the point that all good comes not from himself, but from God - and missing his own sinfulness.

Yet the tax collector's prayer: "God, be merciful to me a sinner," is the basis for what can be called the "penitent's prayer" - and is even, with a bit of modification, one of the "Acts of Contrition" in the ritual book for confession.

Let us reflect on that short "penitent's prayer" as we move past the halfway point in Lent. Let us beg God's mercy - short and sweet - and be prepared to receive that mercy in the way of transforming grace - to change us from the people we are ... into the people God created us to be.