



RAMTELL

Reverence

Saint Luke's Gospel contains a parable that Jesus addressed "to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else." The story describes two different people—a proud religious leader and a despised social outcast who both go into the Temple to pray. One is full of himself. The other acknowledges his unworthiness and seeks God's forgiveness.

Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee, and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, "O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dishonest, adulterous—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income." But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for whoever exalts

himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted (Lk 18:9–14).

Which of these two showed reverence in this holy place? Which one was humbled in the presence of a power greater than himself?

"Reverence" means a deep sense of respect, awe, and honor toward someone or something. It's more than just politeness—it carries the idea of recognizing greatness, holiness, dignity, or worth. Reverence often includes feelings of humility, admiration, and love. We adore God alone, but we give reverence and respect to the people, places, and things that mirror God's glory.

Reverence in the Catholic Church is expressed in our profound awareness of the sacredness of the church building and the Holy Mass which is celebrated there. We show our reverence by gestures—kneeling, silence, and prayerful attention to the statues, stained glass, and other images such as the stations of the cross, which portray the life of Christ. We venerate the sacred symbols which honor and give

respect to Christ's Blessed Mother and to all the angels and saints who sing His praises in an unceasing chorus of grace and glory.

We revere the Virgin Mary and all the saints because their lives were patterned on the goodness and mercy of Jesus Christ our Lord. And we demonstrate this attitude of profound respect when we receive the sacraments (signs and instruments of God's grace), when we pray and meditate on the Word of God, when we visit churches and other holy places, and most especially when we are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Basilicas, cathedrals, parish churches, and even small chapels or shrines are considered sacred spaces because the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which the Catechism of the Catholic Church calls "the source and summit of the Christian life" (CCC 1324), is offered there. We are eager to show profound reverence and respect for these holy places because there the Real Presence of Jesus comes to us in Holy Communion and waits for us in the sacred silence of the Holy Tabernacle.

What we wear, what we say and do, how fully we participate in the liturgy, and how seriously we take the symbols of grace all around us are outward signs of the way we feel in the presence of the people, places, and things that reflect God's glory. Are we respectful or indifferent? Are we conscious of God's

presence or are we full of ourselves, feeling no different than we would in any "ordinary" place?

In the Old Testament, Moses encountered God in a flaming bush that burned brightly but did not consume it, and he proclaimed that place "holy ground." In the New Testament, the apostles Peter, James, and John witnessed the Transfiguration of the Lord on a holy mountain that is still considered a holy place today. And, at the bitter end of the Lord's passion and death, Mary and those few followers who stood with Jesus at the foot of cross experienced sorrow and grief in the cruel place of execution that was consecrated (made holy) by the Lord's precious blood poured out for us there.

Our response to any encounter with the holy people, places, and things who reflect God's love and goodness should be a joy-filled reverence that shows how grateful we are. We are compelled to know, love and serve God in and through His Holy Church. May the love of Christ grow in our hearts and minds, and may we serve Him reverently in our concrete acts of love and mercy toward others.

Examples of reverence

Two RamTell board members, Father Tony Hollowell, pastor of St. Paul Church in Tell City, IN, and Father Dan Staublin, pastor of St. Ambrose Church in

Seymour, IN, provided some reflections on the importance of reverence and the ways it is experienced in the Church today.

Father Tony Hollowell shared some insights following his recent pilgrimage to Rome with some of his parishioners. He said that he observed reverence particularly in the way his fellow pilgrims respected one another and cared for each other as they visited the holy places of Rome. He said this was especially true as they witnessed Pope Leo's interactions with catechists from all over the world who each received a blessed crucifix from the Holy Father as a sign of the importance of their ministries.

One of Father Tony's parishioners observed that Pope Leo seemed, at first glance, to be distant as he handed out the crucifixes. But, looking closer, the parishioner realized that the pope was gazing on the face of Christ in each crucifix, and that he appeared to be giving homage to Christ crucified. This reminded Father Tony of the parable quoted above. Reverence is not primarily the external gestures that we make in church. It is first and foremost the interior disposition that we feel (our sense of unworthiness) in the presence of God.

Father Dan Staublin said that for him, as pastor of a diverse community of parishioners in Seymour, Indiana, what is most significant is the way that the different cultures represented in his parish have added to the sense of reverence for the entire community. The strong Latino presence has helped everyone appreciate more fully the Church's traditional devotions—for example, praying the rosary, spending time before the Blessed Sacrament, and participating in novena prayers. Making Sunday worship a priority, and attending Mass as a family, are strong emphases in both the Latino community and the Vietnamese community at St. Ambrose, and this witness has helped many in the Anglo community remember how important reverence is to the Catholic faith. Father Dan has had many people tell him that the blending of these diverse communities in prayer at St. Ambrose has enhanced the whole parish's experience of worship and its profound sense of reverence.

RamTell, Inc., is pleased to support these two parish communities, St. Paul's and St. Ambrose, and we are grateful to Father Tony and Father Dan for their reverent service to their parishes and their local communities.