Saturday of the Third Week of Lent

Gospel text (*Lk* 18:9-14): Jesus then addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. “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 (...) 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 (...).”

"Ethos" (human nature) and "grace"

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, Jesus Christ graphically illustrates the relationship between "ethos" (personality or human nature) and "grace". The Pharisee brags about his many virtues; the publican acknowledges his sins, he knows that he cannot boast before God and, conscious of his guilt, he pleads for the grace. Does it mean that one stands for the "ethos" while the other speaks for the grace without "ethos" or against "ethos"?

Actually, they are just two different ways of placing ourselves before God and before ourselves. One does not even look at God, but only to himself; the other one sees himself in relation to God, thereby opening his eyes to himself (he knows he needs God and that he has to live by His goodness). The "ethos" is not denied; it is only liberated from the narrowness of moralism and placed in the context of the relationship of love with God.

—The grace I implore does not exempt me from the "ethos": I need God, and thanks to His goodness, I can move towards Goodness.