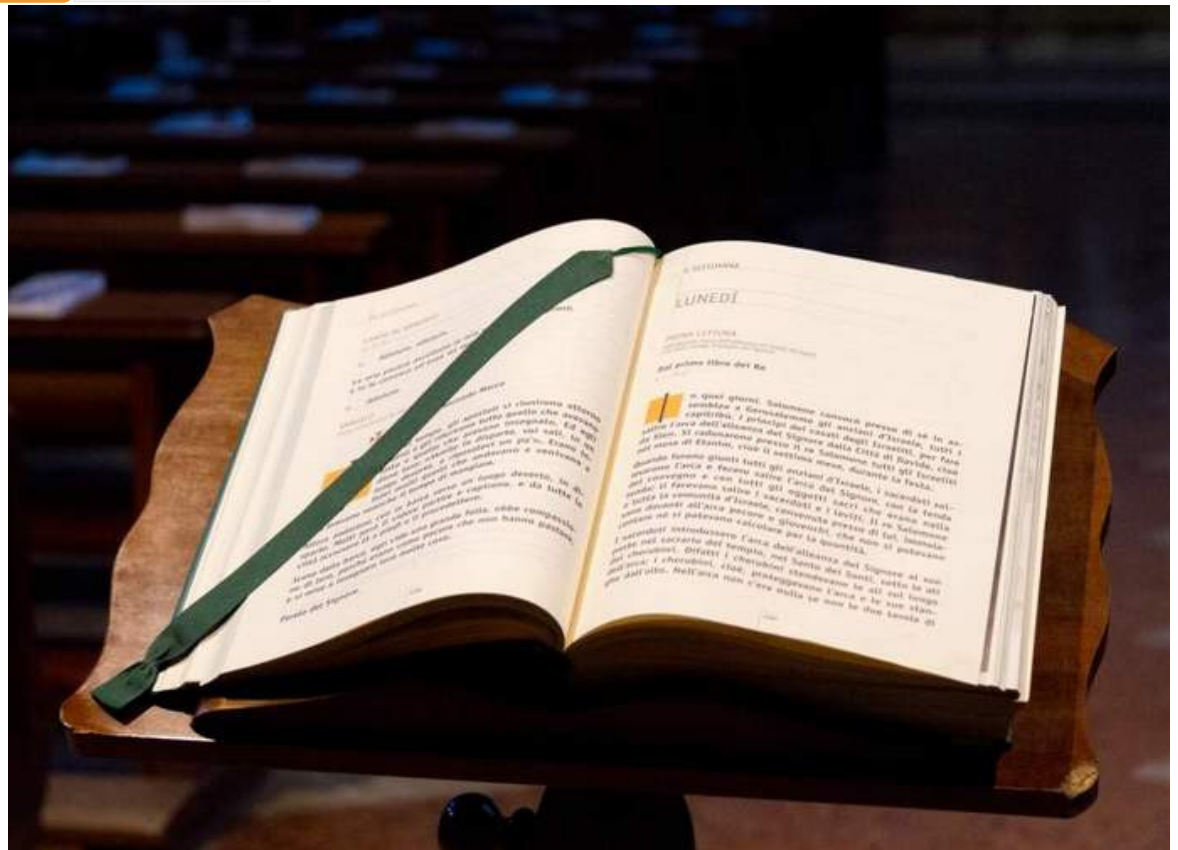


GOSPEL PEARLS

Are we among the 99 righteous?

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Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner

who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15: 1-10)

We often forget that without God we are completely lost. It is, therefore, wrong to judge those who have not yet said yes to God or who do not rejoice in the conversion of others we believed to be once lost. Rather, we must consider it is certainly easier to be good Christians for those of us who have been blessed with good Christian examples since childhood compared to those who first seek God as adults. Let us try not to be among the 99 righteous who perhaps do not feel the need to continually ask for God's Mercy, but are always in great need of it.