

Theme: Repentance

- What a surprise Zacchaeus must have had when Jesus called him by name.
 - Imagine yourself in the town of Jericho that day— the dusty streets with sun beating down...the bustling crowds, the marketplace...
 - As Jesus came toward this dry dusty town of Jericho with his disciples...a cry goes up...and the crowds of the desperate, the curious...the hopeful...come to meet him on the outskirts of the city.
 - The prophet...the miracle worker...the teacher...has come.
 - Zacchaeus hears all the buzz. Now Zacchaeus is a rich man...a boss of all the tax collectors...and yet shunned and considered a traitor by his fellow Jews for working for the Romans conquerors.
 - But Zacchaeus seeks to see this Jesus who is all the rage.
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 - Zacchaeus had perhaps given into temptation—to be important, to be rich, to be influential...to work with the conquerors of his own people.
 - As a result, he was hated...separated from the people of God.
 - Yet...somewhere, sometime, somehow...his conscience had been slowly breaking through.
 - He longs once again to be one of the people...in good standing with God.
 - And he wonders: *“Will this man manifest the power of God for me to see? Can he show me something to tip the scale and make me believe...make me quit this wretched life I have chosen?”*
- Then Jesus comes...the healer...the prophet.
- Here a man thirsting for holiness longs to see the fountain of all holiness.

- And yet...in his eagerness, Zachaeus finds himself blocked by the crowd.
- Desperately, fearing to miss his chance to see Jesus, this important man humbles himself and climbs a tree like a child.
- And then, of all the persons in this crowd, Jesus—this man whom he had never met or even seen--looks up at HIM, and calls him by name, “*Zacchaeus...I must stay at your house.*”
- Taken aback, Zacchaeus thinks: “*Here, indeed, is a prophet... and more.*”
- And Jesus accepts Zachaeus when others would not...offering God’s forgiveness to this sinner of sinners.

- We see the exterior of men, but Jesus knows our hearts.
- Jesus knows that Zacchaeus is on the edge of conversion.
- This gesture of acceptance—the love of God—pushes him over that edge, and Zacchaeus “*received him with joy.*”
- Jesus is heedless of scandal of going “*to the house of a sinner*”, because He comes to save what was lost.
- And Zacchaeus stands before all, publicly pledging half of his possessions to the poor...promising to repay anyone fourfold who he had extorted in the past.

- Now Jesus’ name, pronounced “*Ye’hoshua*”, or “*Yeshua*” in the original language, means “salvation”, and He says that “*Today, salvation (“yeshu’ah”) has come to this house.*”
- Why? “*Because this man, too, is a descendant of Abraham.*”
- Zacchaeus has returned to the Father...a prodigal son of God.

- Our first reading from the book of Wisdom said: “*...you overlook people’s sins that they may repent. For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned.*”
- Jesus, likewise, looked upon Zacchaeus with love...for all men—including the sinner—are not only creations of God, but

created in the IMAGE of God...and thus are called to be “mirrors” of Christ.

- ▣ The reading then says: “...*you spare all things, because they are yours, O LORD and lover of souls...Therefore you rebuke offenders little by little, warn them and remind them of the sins they are committing, that they may abandon their wickedness and believe in you, O LORD.*”

- ▣ How much we are like Zacchaeus.
- ▣ When are faced with temptation, how easily we fall.
- ▣ But, like Zacchaeus, our hearts tell us that we have done wrong, for knowledge of the natural law—which is the divine law as it applies to us—is written into our souls by God.
- ▣ In major things we cannot say, “We didn’t know it was wrong.”

- ▣ And when we climb the tree of humility and repentance, Jesus calls US by name, and tells US to “*come down quickly, for today I stay at your house.*”
- ▣ And the one who greets him with faith and joy replies: “*Lord, I am not worthy to receive you under my roof, but only say the word and I shall be healed.*”
- ▣ As with Zacchaeus, Jesus never stops longing to dwell “*under our roof*” ---within our souls—both in Spirit and through the grace given through the Eucharist at Mass.
- ▣ But we must approach him in humility, and be determined to do what is right to both God and neighbor.
- ▣ And then He says to US: “*Today* salvation has come to this house”

- ▣ We, too, must climb the tree of humility that is the confessional—where the grace gained by Jesus on the tree of HIS humiliation—the cross—becomes the tree of our forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

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- But—like Zacchaeus—we must come with sincere heart...with firm, sincere intention to correct our ways...to not offend God.
- And we need not wait for weeks, months or years; the tree of our reconciliation is an open door.
- If you were to fall into a sewer, would you wait weeks, months...years to shower off the filth from you.
- How much more so should we run to have Christ cleanse off the infinitely worse filth of sin?

- Every week we have confessions. A simple five minutes in the tree of the confessional and you are cleansed of sin and guilt, clean and pure before God.
- By the very fact that you have come to Mass today, you *know* that Jesus is calling to you.
- He is telling you: “I must come to your house...to your soul.”
- But—like Zacchaeus could have done—we can refuse.
- We can—like the leaders of the temple—refuse him, and in doing so laugh at his sacrifice on the cross.
- Or...we can recognize the great gift of God given in grace in his mercy to us through his sacraments.

- We work and slave for years to earn a few dollars, to buy a few pieces of junk that we’ll throw away in a few days or months... and yet the infinitely greater treasure which lasts for eternity lies before us here in the Church for the taking.
- You would call someone a fool who refused a treasure, yet we refuse the greatest treasure of all—the treasure of God’s grace and mercy.
- All it takes is a little time—and love—for God, and for your fellow man.
- And, dipping into that never-exhausted fountain of grace, YOU will hear Jesus whisper in the ear of your heart—calling YOU by name: “*Today salvation—Yeshu’ah—has come to this house. For I have come to recover what was lost.*”

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year C

Reading 1

Wis 11:22-12:2

Before the LORD the whole universe is as a grain from a balance
or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth.
But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things;
and you overlook people's sins that they may repent.
For you love all things that are
and loathe nothing that you have made;
for what you hated, you would not have fashioned.
And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it;
or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you?
But you spare all things, because they are yours,
O LORD and lover of souls,
for your imperishable spirit is in all things!
Therefore you rebuke offenders little by little,
warn them and remind them of the sins they are committing,
that they may abandon their wickedness and believe in you, O LORD!

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13, 14

R. (cf. 1) I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

I will extol you, O my God and King,
and I will bless your name forever and ever.

Every day will I bless you,
and I will praise your name forever and ever.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.

The LORD is good to all
and compassionate toward all his works.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,
and let your faithful ones bless you.

Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

The LORD is faithful in all his words
and holy in all his works.

The LORD lifts up all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Reading II
2 Thes 1:11-2:2

Brothers and sisters:
We always pray for you,
that our God may make you worthy of his calling
and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose
and every effort of faith,
that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you,
and you in him,
in accord with the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask you, brothers and sisters,
with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ
and our assembling with him,
not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or to be alarmed
either by a "spirit," or by an oral statement,
or by a letter allegedly from us
to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand.

Gospel
Lk 19:1-10

At that time, Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town.
Now a man there named Zacchaeus,
who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man,
was seeking to see who Jesus was;
but he could not see him because of the crowd,
for he was short in stature.
So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus,
who was about to pass that way.
When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said,
"Zacchaeus, come down quickly,
for today I must stay at your house."
And he came down quickly and received him with joy.
When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying,
"He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner."
But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord,
"Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor,
and if I have extorted anything from anyone
I shall repay it four times over."
And Jesus said to him,
"Today salvation has come to this house

because this man too is a descendant of Abraham.
For the Son of Man has come to seek
and to save what was lost."