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31st Sunday in Ordinary Time - 30 October 2022

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30 October 2022

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Tony Doran

Introduction

As we near the end of the Liturgical Year, our readings begin to change their emphasis and now look towards the end times. It is a time for decision. It is a time to change ourselves, like Zacchaeus, for Jesus wants to make his home in us.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came that we might have eternal life.
Lord, have mercy.

You seek those who are lost.
Christ, have mercy.

You lift us up to the Father.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect

The oration

Almighty and merciful God,
by whose gift your faithful offer you
right and praiseworthy service,
grant, we pray,
that we may hasten without stumbling
to receive the things you have promised.

As with the prayer for the previous Sunday, this collect most probably comes from the pen of Pope Vigilius, perhaps for the Mass for Sunday, November 22, 537. The immediate historical context is the siege of Rome by the Arian Ostrogoths under the leadership of Witiges.

The sense of the prayers is that through the gift of fitting and worthy worship, the faithful find both the assurance that God wills them to enter the promises and the motivation to approach them in sinless, loving obedience to the divine precepts. As

well, worthy worship arouses in them a loving desire for the gift of eternal life. Such proper and fitting worship connotes the faithful's devotion and humility in the face of their own sinfulness and God's forgiveness, their reliance on the supplication of the saints, and their desire that all praise be directed towards the one worshipped. As well it is a foretaste of eternal beatitude. Even in the face of invasion by the Arian Ostrogoths, Christian worship should not be forgotten since it is central to a life lived in God and is a taste of true salvation! For God to grant the Church that it maintains this worship, is to keep it on the way to the eternal life promised by him.

First Reading

Wisdom 11:22-12:2

In this meditation on God's wisdom, the author contrasts the smallness of Creation with the vastness of God's merciful love, especially in response to a repentant sinner.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 144:1-2, 8-11, 13-14. R. cf. v. 1

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

Continuing the themes from the first reading, this psalm exalts God as the divine king whose greatness cannot be measured or fathomed. Unfathomable, too, is God's mercy to those who are bowed down.

Second Reading

2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:2

This Sunday, we begin reading from Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians, one of the earliest New Testament writings. Today's reading is part of the long thanksgiving which forms the first section of the letter in which the author prays that his readers might be worthy of the Lord's call, for in this, Jesus Christ is glorified.

Gospel Reading

Luke 19:1-10

Luke's Gospel is often called the Gospel of the Outcast because the Gospel embraces the poor and lowly and those on the margins. Seemingly, Zacchaeus is none of these: he is a wealthy tax-collector. His past actions, though, have 'cast him out'. But, in Jesus, he senses something more; someone to transform his life, someone to bring him in from the margin to the heart of God's mercy and love.

Reflection

Are we there yet? If you have ever been on a long journey with a child, you will have heard this question, no doubt. Throughout the course of this Liturgical Year, we have been journeying with Jesus towards Jerusalem as we have read Luke's Gospel. It has been a long journey, too. And we might well ask ourselves the question: 'Are we there yet?'

Well, we are almost there. We are very close indeed.

Today's Gospel reading finds Jesus in Jericho. Jericho is an interesting town. It is one of the oldest inhabited cities on the planet. It is also about 300 metres below sea level, so it's a steep climb down into Jericho. And who do we meet in Jericho? None other than Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus is one of the more famous characters in the Gospels. Everyone knows him. He is the short man who climbs a tree 'because he was anxious to see what kind of man Jesus was.' And he has been depicted up that sycamore tree in thousands of children's pictures and role-plays in classrooms across the planet and across history.

What kind of man Jesus was... What was it about Jesus that intrigued Zacchaeus? He had probably heard plenty of stories about Jesus. But wandering preachers and wonderworkers abounded at that time. They literally dotted the Judean countryside. Don't think that Jesus was the only one who went from town-to-town teaching and healing. He wasn't. But whatever it was, something about Jesus intrigued Zacchaeus and made Zacchaeus want to find out more.

And this is somewhat surprising. For, on the surface, Zacchaeus does not seem to have been the sort of person who would have been all that interested in the message which Jesus had been preaching.

Because, as Luke tells us, 'Zacchaeus...was one of the senior tax-collectors and a wealthy man.' And as we have followed Jesus, we know that he has made wealthy people feel uncomfortable. Tax-collectors, then as now, were not popular. They undertook to collect the taxes for the Romans. They were seen as traitors to the People of Israel. And the deal was that they would collect three or four times the amount required, pay the tax to the Romans, and pocket the rest. It's no wonder Zacchaeus was a wealthy man.

But, although wealthy, Zacchaeus 'was anxious to see what kind of man Jesus was.' And 'when Jesus reached the spot he looked up and spoke to him, "Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I must stay at your house today.'"

Immediately, Zacchaeus is a changed man. He promises to give away half of his property. He is going to repay those he has cheated four times over.

This is the sort of man that Jesus is. He has the power to change us. For he wishes to come and stay with us. To make his home with us. And when he comes to make his home with us, truly we can say 'salvation has come to this house'.

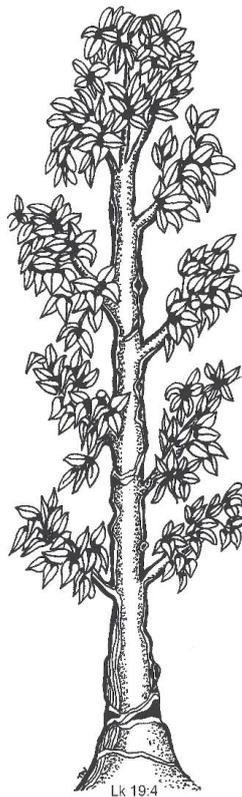
On his journey to Jerusalem, Jesus had made the steep climb down to Jericho, and then another steep climb up towards Jerusalem about 23 kilometres to the South-West. It would have been a long journey, indeed. And we are invited to follow Jesus on this journey.

But this journey to Jerusalem has been more than just a physical journey. For, if we read Luke's Gospel carefully, we find no signposts, no markers. The longer journey,

and probably the more difficult one, is the spiritual journey we are invited to undertake when we follow Jesus. This journey is steeper than the climb down to Jericho, and more difficult than the climb out of the valley up to Jerusalem. But, as difficult as it is, this is the journey we are called to make. It is a journey to Jerusalem, yes. And to follow Jesus to Jerusalem is to follow him to the Cross. There is no way around this. Look at Zacchaeus. He still had to face up to his past: those who he had cheated as a tax-collector. We have to face the Cross. We have to suffer the Cross. This is frightening. It does make us scared.

But we are never asked to do this alone. Like the journey to Jerusalem, we make it with Jesus. And together with Jesus, we rise to glory.

This, I suspect, is what drew Zacchaeus to Jesus. In ways that Zacchaeus would not have been able to put into words, Zacchaeus could see in Jesus the answer to his longings and yearnings. In Jesus, Zacchaeus could see the power to change his life. The power to raise him to glory. A glory to which we too are called.



zacchaeus
climbed a tree
to see Jesus.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

In today's readings we can see that God really helped people to see what they needed in their lives for happiness. We bring our prayers and petitions with the sure knowledge that God will grant our needs and help us to see the difference between our needs and our wants.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis that he will continue to have the health and strength to lead with his fellow bishops in helping the world to see Jesus as he truly is.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all the leaders of our troubled world that they will have the humility to turn to those who are wise and seek their advice before they impose heavy burdens on the poor.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all the sick at heart or who struggle to believe that they will be able to turn to Jesus as Zacchaeus did.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the People of God in Australia as we move to the next phase of the journey of the Plenary Council and the Synod of 2023. May we be sincere in following the prompting of the Spirit as we move with the changes in our Church.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who grieve for lost loved ones that they will understand that those for whom they mourn enjoy God's perfection for eternity

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for workers everywhere that they remain honest and authentic in all their dealings and follow Jesus' way as Zacchaeus eventually did.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

We offer you our prayers because we know in faith that you continue to answer our needs and give us the grace to achieve your will. We make our prayer in the name of Jesus, our Lord, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	GA	CWB	CWBII	S&S 1	S&S2
Alleluia, sing to Jesus	191			371	619	449		
Amazing grace	29			437		450		
As gentle as silence				470	621	580		
Bread of the world in mercy broken					631	460		
Come to the water (Andersen)	74					473		
Come to the water (Foley)				403				
Deo gratias							108	
Eye has not seen	146			466				
Forgive our sins as we forgive					680	120		
Hail Redeemer, king divine!				390	703	400		
Holy God, we praise your name		129		411		504		
How great thou art	94					577		
I have loved you	126			402		511		
I heard the voice of Jesus say	54			468		512		
Love divine, all loves excelling				463	740	552		
Praise my soul, the king of heaven	78				789	588		
Praise to the Lord		132			792	586		
Sing a new song		76				600		
Sing of the Lord's goodness						601		
Sing praise to our Creator					809	393		
The Kingdom of God						616		
The Lord is near/I will praise your name								285
The Lord my shepherd rules my life					829			
There's a wideness in God's mercy					838	624		
Though the mountains may fall	182			453				
To Jesus Christ our sovereign king					847	401		
Turn our sadness upside down			125					
We remember	81			446				
What a friend we have in Jesus			117					

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 144: *I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.*

	CWB	GA	JOBC	JOBF	LPC	PM
Psalm 144	337	82	pg. 104		pg. 168	pg. 108

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Forever I will sing (FWS) *Based on Ps 144/145* [Gathering, Recessional]
Merciful (DOM)