

## 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

I have a good friend who was trained by his parents to make the Sign of the Cross and say a quick prayer when an ambulance passed by, and he did this very faithfully. He was not as faithful, however, about other aspects of his Catholic faith and in college fell away from it, yet he continued to do this little prayer each time he heard the sirens. One time he was doing it while he was with a group of friends and they teased him about his practice and asked him why he did it. He himself was not quite sure and so he decided to find out and that led him back to his faith.

Today we hear a story of a man, a very important rich man, who stepped out of his regular life and wanted to see Jesus. He does what is not customary for a man and climbs a tree like a child or a youth so he can see Jesus. And he finds out that Jesus was looking for him. It is amazing to see that after simply being invited by Jesus, Zacchaeus gives away half of his possessions and resolves to pay back his frauds in life. That is an amazing conversion. This man went out of his way to meet our Lord and was rewarded with the blessing. What stops us from having a powerful encounter with the Lord today?

Cardinal Sarah in his book, "The Day is Far Spent," says that routine can easily harden our hearts to the point that the two edged sword of the Word of God can no longer penetrate our routine, hardened armour. Did we come before the Lord that way today? Did we come to Mass but have not brought a heart that is ready to change to encounter the Lord? I recommend we go out of our routine today. If you are not accustomed to singing, open your book and sing. If you don't like reading along, do it today. Question yourself in the Mass: why do we do this and that? Write down your questions and look them up in the week to come. Break out and you will be surprised on how you can meet the Lord anew.

I remember the monk who was the rector of the seminary and the Scripture professor, Fr Nicolas. He told us that we should read along with the Mass and then if we saw something that captivated us to meditate on it then when we were done continue to read along. It always impressed me that Fr Nicolas did follow along each Mass. Though he was an older man and had been going to Mass for seventy or so years, he was determined to meet the Lord in Mass. I remember Fr Placidus, another older monk, would sometimes dash into the sacristy and pull out the Latin Missal after Mass to read one of the prayers to see if it was the same affect as in English. They were like little children when it came to God. Fr Nicolas had a stern face that could make the devil himself feel displeased. But when he talked of God and the miracles that happened to him, he would light up with joy like a little child on Christmas morning. These men reminded me that we must be always breaking our routines and climb high when we come to Mass. Have you ever seen a child whose parents or grandparents have instructed them about the Mass, how excited they are? One child asked his grandma after she told him that Jesus comes to the altar, "Is Jesus now here?" Or at one Baptism for my brother's son, one of the Godparents took my niece to the middle of the aisle, and my niece pointed to the cross and said, "That is Jesus." These are beautiful things and we are reminded of Jesus words, "Unless you become like a little child, you cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Unless you and I are like a little child we will not look to think that Jesus will really come here and make Himself present. We do not know all that goes on here. I bet we could not even explain

it correctly to a child. Questions like: Why do we have an altar? Why do we sit stand and kneel? Why do we sing at Mass? Why do we dip our hands in holy water? Why does the priest dress up? Why do we have a collection? Why do we use bread and water? Why do we have to come here on Sunday? If we don't have these questions answered how can we say that we are interested? If we are not interested we have lost the heart of the child that is always interested and we need to start questioning the small things like a child. I remember in the seminary I felt for the first time I was on an adventure as I discovered many beautiful truths about my faith. Many things I had taken for granted and was ignorant of because my poor heart was stuck in the routine attendance of faith. I mean, I used to pray the rosary to get through it then I discovered that God wanted to talk to me when I prayed the rosary and I found God wanted to talk to me at Mass and when I read the Scriptures. And my heart was captured once again. Break your mold today, break your routine and you, like Zacchaeus, will be delighted to meet the Lord.