

The Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time/Year C –
29/30 October 2016 – National Priesthood Sunday –
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community –
HOMILY

1st Reading:

Wisdom 11:22-12:2

- “But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook people’s sins that they may repent. . . . 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:

Psalm 145 - *Sung*

2nd Reading:

2 Thessalonians 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, . . . We ask you, . . . with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . not to be shaken out of your minds . . . to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand.”

GOSPEL:

LUKE 19:1-10

- “Now a man 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. . . . 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 possession, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over. . . . “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.”

i. Several years ago, at one of our bi-annual Priests' Convocations, the presenter began the days of our gathering by showing a video . . . the title of the video was, "Celebrate What's Right With the World" . . . The filmmaker was National Geographic Photographer Dewitt Jones . . .

For any interested, you can find it on the web in some version . . . although to purchase the series of inspirational videos produced by Starthrower, the company that produces and distributes these, the price is high . . . but . . . the message worth it . . .

In this particular video, there was one line in particular that shook me, and, as is evident, has stayed with me. I would preface this by saying that so many of us have been raised with the notion of "Seeing is believing." . . . In other words, "Show me the proof; show me the results; the plan . . . whatever . . . and then, well then, I may believe . . . then, I may be convinced." Sadly, this seems to be so very, very true in our times . . . so many spend so much time and energy on producing . . . doing . . . bouncing from one activity to the next . . . convinced that all of our producing . . . all of our doing will result in **THE** happiness we so hunger for . . .

In the video, the central character takes a different approach, challenging the viewer. Dewitt states, "If you

believe it, you will see it!" "If you believe it, you will see it!"

II. The more I thought then, and continue to think now, about this simple, but profound thought, the more I not only began, but continue, seeing things I had not necessarily seen before. I mean **really seeing** . . . and not that these were necessarily hidden . . .

It occurred to me that all too frequently, I was looking for, and perhaps still do at times . . . I was looking for the proof; the result . . . rather than believing that what is in front of me was and is proof enough what happens each and every moment of every day is the result . . . result of love . . . not a love that is earned, but one that is given even when I reject it . . . the result of care . . . offered even before I ask for it or know that I need it . . . the result of compassion . . . from one who has the capacity to be more compassionate than I will ever understand . . . the result of acting out in gratitude . . . grateful for **me** . . . a mere human person . . .

Yes, I was . . . and perhaps still do at times, continue to "search for the proof . . . the result" . . . and yet, everything that happens is the proof and result of something . . . especially of God's magnificent hand at work . . .

Perhaps we all need to think about this statement . . .
“If you believe it, you will see it!”

iii. Think of the possibilities this opens up . . . to everything in life . . . to our relationship with one another, with our family and friends, our neighbors . . . with our God . . . but it also causes us to be challenged . . . challenged by asking ourselves, **“Just what is it that I believe?”** . . .
.

This is, perhaps, the first and most fundamental question we need to ask, since, if we are not certain about what we believe, well then, it can't be possible to see the proof of it . . . the results of our belief.

Take Zacchaeus . . . did he climb the tree to catch sight of Jesus in the hope that he would **believe** something more . . . or did Zacchaeus **believe** that Jesus was what he needed most . . . and so, chose to climb a tree because he needed to and wanted to see what he **believed?** The presence of complete love. The presence of acceptance. The presence of absolute compassion and mercy. The presence and promise of a new life . . . a new way . . . restored hope?

Zacchaeus, I believe, knew that there was something **more** . . . he **believed** that there was something more . . . and because he **believed** he was able to see this more . .

. he was able to see that Jesus was the incarnation of this **more** . . . and everything that encounter would ultimately mean for Zacchaeus.

IV. The possibilities of this are endless.

Some of you are well aware that for the past several years, one thing that has weighed heavily on my mind and heart and on the minds and hearts of others has been . . . and continues to be . . . those missing regularly from our community . . . for that matter . . . those missing from the Church and other communities of faith . . .

Over the past few years and, in particular, the past several months . . . I and others have met and prayed and studied and reflected and proposed and taken some baby steps and done all sorts of things to figure out just what we are being called to do . . . as individuals and as a faith community . . . and I do believe God has been leading . . . I . . . perhaps, we . . . have just been a little slow to walk where God has been leading us. . .

One of the things that has become **most** clear in all of this is the centrality of our call . . . yours, mine, all believers and members of the Church . . . the call to **evangelize** . . . it is **NOT** a choice . . . it is part and parcel of our Baptismal covenant . . .

Now, no one here present will ever begin to take a step forward with this until each and every one of us asks ourselves, “**Just what is it that I believe?**” . . . and then takes the time to **answer** that question . . .

Be careful . . . for if any of us believes that **Jesus Christ** is, in fact, the Son of God . . . the one who came into this world . . . taking human form so that he might die and rise again in order that we might share in the promise of eternal life . . . If any of us believes that **Jesus Christ** loved the sinner, the tax collector, the adulterer, the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich . . . the betrayer as well as the supporter . . . yes, if any of us believes that **Jesus Christ** loved not only all of these kinds of persons but loves **me** . . . loves **you** . . . not based on who He calls us to be but who He knows us to be . . . right now, this very minute . . . If any of us believes this and more about **Jesus Christ** and **is not** willing to share so precious a gift . . . then perhaps all that we **profess to believe** has not moved out of our heads into our hearts and our souls . . . and if that is the case, then we need to **pray** and **pray hard** that the Lord will **move** us and **shake** us . . . **move** us and **shake** us from what is comfortable and complacent in us so that we might, with courage and grace . . . the courage and grace God wants to unlock in each of us . . . go forth, and not **hesitate** to share His Good News . . . go forth, and **make disciples!**

V. Again, think about this encounter with Zaccheus . . .

Jesus believed In Zaccheus . . . Jesus **believed** in Zaccheus and Jesus **saw** in Zaccheus someone much more than “**small of stature**” . . . someone who had the potential to be much better than a **sinner** . . . someone who was **starving** for more . . . recognizing that the **source** of his more was none other than the **Lord!**

And then, there is Zaccheus . . . he **believed** that the Lord was exactly that . . . the **more** he so longed for . . . and he **saw** the Lord for who he was and would be for Zaccheus and others . . . and he did not hesitate . . . He welcomed the Lord into his home . . . into his life . . . and gathered others with him so that they too might ultimately **believe** and **see** the one they longed for . . .

That is evangelization . . . when we act on the grace, courage and charity to not hold on tightly to what has become Good News in our lives . . . but share that Good News with others . . . **believing** that in and through our sharing . . . in and through our words and our actions . . . **others** will come to **believe** and ultimately **see** what we so cherish . . .

“If you believe it, then, you will see it.”

The Lord wants to stay with us today . . . and he wants to stay with others as well . . . it is up to us to let them know . . . up to us . . . to bring them that good news!