

# Sunday 31st (C) in Ordinary Time

**Gospel text (Lk 19,1-10):** When Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the city, a man named Zaccheus was there. He was a tax collector and a wealthy man. He wanted to see what Jesus was like, but he was a short man and could not see because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree. From there he would be able to see Jesus who had to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, «Zaccheus, come down quickly for I must stay at your house today».

So Zaccheus hurried down and received him joyfully. All the people who saw it began to grumble and said, «He has gone to the house of a sinner as a guest». But Zaccheus spoke to Jesus, «The half of my goods, Lord, I give to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay him back four times as much». Looking at him Jesus said, «Salvation has come to this house today, for he is also a true son of Abraham. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost».

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*«Zaccheus, come down quickly for I must stay at your house today»*

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Today, it looks as if the Evangelic narrative was the accomplishment of the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (cf. Lk 18:9-14). Humbly and sincerely, the tax collector was praying from the bottom of his heart: «O God, be merciful to me a sinner» (Lk 18:13); and, today, we contemplate how Jesus Christ honors Zaccheus' repentance by forgiving him, the Jericho chief tax collector, a wealthy and influent man, though hated and underrated by his neighbors, who felt bled by him: «Zaccheus, come down quickly for I must stay at your house today» (Lk 19:5). The divine forgiveness provokes the conversion of Zaccheus; this is one of the originalities of the Gospel: God's forgiveness is free; it is not that God forgives us

because of our conversion, but the other way round: God's mercy sort of impels us to feel grateful and reciprocate accordingly.

As Jesus, on his way to Jerusalem, passes through Jericho, Jesus passes through our life, today and every day, and calls us by name. Zaccheus had never seen Jesus before, but he had heard of him and was curious to know more about such famous master. Jesus, instead, did know Zaccheus and the miseries of his life. Jesus was aware of the fact Zaccheus had enriched himself to the injury of others and was, therefore, hated and rejected by his fellow citizens; this is why He passed through Jericho, to rescue him from that well: «The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost» (Lk 19:10).

The encounter between the Master and the tax collector totally changed the latter's life. After having listened to this Gospel, ponder over the opportunity God is offering you, which you cannot neglect: Jesus Christ passes through your life and calls you by name, because He loves you and He wants to save you. Which well did you fall in? As Zaccheus climbed up to that tree better to see Jesus, you can now climb up to the Cross along with Jesus and you will know who is He, you will know the immensity of his love, inasmuch as if «The chief among the Publicans is here fitly introduced: For who will hereafter despair of himself, now that he attains to grace who gained his living by fraud?» (St. Ambrose).