Tuesday of the Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*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 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.”

“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost.”

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Today, I am Zacchaeus. He was a rich man and the chief tax collector; I have more than I need, and perhaps I often act like a tax collector and forget about Christ. Amidst the crowd, Jesus seeks out Zacchaeus; today, in the midst of this world, He seeks me out specifically: "Come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house" (Lk 19:5).

Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus, but he cannot do so unless he makes the effort to climb the tree. How often I wish I could see God’s action at work, but I don’t know if I am truly willing to make a fool of myself by acting like Zacchaeus. The willingness shown by this chief tax collector of Jericho is essential for Jesus to act; and if you do not act promptly, you might miss the only opportunity to be touched by God, and thus, to be saved. Perhaps I have had many chances to encounter Jesus, and it may be time to be courageous: to step out, to meet Him, and to invite Him to enter my inner self, so that He might say of me, too: "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 " (Lk 19:9-10).

Zacchaeus welcomes Jesus into his home and into his heart, even though he does not feel very worthy of such a visit. In him, conversion is total: it begins by renouncing the pursuit of wealth, continues with a commitment to share his possessions, and culminates in his determination to do what is right by making amends for the sins he has committed. Maybe Jesus has been asking something similar of me for a long time, but I don't want to listen to Him and I turn a deaf ear; I need conversion.

As Saint Maximus said: "Nothing is so dear and loved by Him as when men turn to Him with true repentance." May He help me make it a reality today.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “What is carried out with a disposition of sad and forced mood does not deserve gratitude nor has nobility. So, when we do good, we must do it, not sadly, but with joy” (Saint Gregory of Nazianzen)

- “The term “eternal life” is intended to give a name to this known “unknown”. It would be like plunging into the ocean of infinite love. We can only attempt to grasp the idea that such a moment is life in the full sense. We must think along these lines if we want to understand the object of Christian hope.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Holy Communion separates us from sin. The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is "given up for us," and the blood we drink "shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins." For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 1393)