

One of the best ways to explore a city is on foot. In many of my city of Toronto or other metropolitan city exploration walks, I was intrigued by the little stalls around the Eaton Centre and other large gathering places asking the question, "What does the Bible teach?" Most of these people never stopped me or hassled me because I usually wore in my clerical collar, but I always answered the question in my head, "The Bible teaches that God is love."

My thinking is that these individuals standing by the stalls are reaching out to the people with such a provocative question to evangelize. They recognize that many people today have different impressions about God. Some view him as a vague spiritual force while others believe that He exists but is absent or far off not wanting to interact in this world and in our daily lives. But this is not the Christian view. Our view of God is that He is love. His love, for lack of a better word, moves him into wanting a relationship with His creation. His love wants us to know Him and for that to happen He reveals himself to us by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, as the fullness of His divine revelation.

This Divine Revelation has been passed down through the centuries by means of Sacred Scripture (that which has been handed on by writing) and Sacred Tradition (that which has been handed on by word of mouth). Both Scripture and Tradition have been entrusted to the teaching authority, or Magisterium, of the Catholic Church - the Church that Christ founded to preserve the message of Jesus until the end of time by the power of the Holy Spirit.

When we surrender our lives to the God who is love, fully revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, we are led out of the confusing currents and fads of the modern world and liberated from our own selfish desires. This surrendering of our lives leads us to recognize that God became man, entered into human history and desires to have a personal relationship with His creation. He can no longer be seen as a spiritual force but a community of Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit united in love. And this God who became man, for all eternity is not absent in our lives nor does he abandon us as we hear proclaimed in the book of Wisdom. The Catechism of the Catholic Church writes, commenting on this passage from Scripture, "With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end." (CCC 301)

The chief tax collector Zacchaeus from today's Gospel becomes a compelling example of what happens when we surrender our lives to the God who is love, fully revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Zacchaeus, curious about who this person Jesus is, welcomes Him into his home, and his life would never be the same. Within the Gospel of Luke, the theme of table fellowship brings light to the desire that God wants to have a person relationship with those he encounters. And although a sinner, the Son of God didn't abandon Zacchaeus, but shows him mercy. Through this exchange, Zacchaeus would repent and put Christ and his way of life and love at the centre of his life...and the words of Jesus are so touching at this moment: Salvation has come to this house.

The love of God has been fully revealed in the person of Jesus Christ who has come to seek out and save the lost. With this revelation entrusted to the Church, we can deduce that the mission has also been given to the Church...to seek out and save the lost. St Theresa of Avila writes that we are to be hands, feet and body of Jesus on this earth. While each of us, in our own way, are being sought after by Our Lord, the Lord is also putting in our hearts and minds someone we know who is lost. There are so many and the statistics can be quite despairing of those who are no longer practicing their faith, have been dechristianized or secularized.

What I ask of you is to begin intentionally praying for that person or group of people that God has placed on your heart. Make sacrifices for that person or group of people. Pray that their hearts may be open, like Zacchaeus, to the mercy that God is offering them in the Church. You dont need to make any asks or invites. Just pray and offer sacrifices for them. And so that you dont forget: write their names down on a piece of paper. In time, what joy it will be for them when they hear the words of Jesus spoken to them: Salvation has come to your home.