



Bringing Home the Word

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
November 3, 2019

Hurry to See Jesus

By Mary Katharine Deeley

I'm the shortest one in nearly every picture in which I appear. It's not that I'm that short (about three inches below average), but I am surrounded by taller people. Consequently, Zacchaeus has always been a particular favorite of mine. I certainly would have tried to get higher to see Jesus, too. Maybe Zacchaeus and I would have shared a branch.

But Zacchaeus inspires me for another reason. When Jesus, whom Zacchaeus knew only by reputation, called to him, his response was immediate. He came down to stand in front of Jesus. In their

society, tax collectors were considered traitors and ostracized by all. In the process of working for the Romans, Zacchaeus strengthened Caesar's influence and likely charged more than he should have to support a wealthy lifestyle when most Jews lived in poverty.

Seeing Zacchaeus in the tree, Jesus seized the opportunity to bring conversion to a sinner. Instead of judgment or bitterness from a stranger, Jesus offered him words of welcome. Zacchaeus heard the invitation (literal and spiritual) in Jesus' statement—"I must stay at your house"—and "received him with joy" (Luke 1:5-6).

When Jesus enters our house, we find the strength to turn from sin. The effect of Jesus' presence on Zacchaeus was immediate. As they stood together, he turned from his sin and promised to care for the poor and make restitution for anything he stole. Let us hurry to receive Jesus into our hearts and turn away from our sin as well. +

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A Word from Pope Francis

The politics of nonviolence have to begin in the home and then spread to the entire human family. "Saint Thérèse of Lisieux invites us to practice the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile, or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship."

—Fiftieth World Day of Peace,
January 1, 2017



Sunday Readings

Wisdom 11:22—12:2

For you love all things that are / and loathe nothing that you have made; / for you would not fashion what you hate.

2 Thessalonians 1:11—2:2

We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling.

Luke 19:1-10

[Jesus said to Zacchaeus,] "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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- Am I listening for Jesus' invitation into my heart and home?
- How can my family and I make our home a more welcoming place for Jesus?

Love Is Our Truest Vocation

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

Being Catholic is not something that happens to us overnight. It takes work and practice—a lot more than just an hour a week in church. It's really the task of a lifetime.

What makes one a Catholic? In one sense, one becomes Catholic by receiving the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist—just as a person becomes married by celebrating the sacrament of matrimony. But as any married person will tell you, the wedding itself doesn't make a marriage. To really become what one promised in the wedding vows takes time and hard work.

Similarly, one doesn't take on Catholic identity merely by receiving the sacraments. Like marriage, Catholic identity requires time and effort. Catholic identity, like marriage, is about love. And love is an art.

Years ago in music school, I would spend hour after hour at the piano learning two pieces required for the end-of-semester recital. After weeks of practice I could play those pieces rather well. But just because I could play two songs didn't mean I was an artist. A real artist isn't limited to a couple of pieces. Artists can play all the pieces.

Similarly, to be good at the art of



Catholic loving you have to be able to love all the pieces. You have to love everyone—even as God loves everyone and invites people of every race, language, and way of life to the great nuptial banquet of the kingdom.

What It's All About?

Love everybody? While this may seem impossible,

it is at the heart of Catholic identity. Our Catholic vocation is essentially a call to be lovers, just as Jesus was. Following Jesus doesn't mean we have to become carpenters, fishermen, or preachers. Following Jesus means we have to become great lovers.

Jesus was an artist at loving. He could play all the pieces. He loved rich and poor people, saints and sinners. As a sign of that universal love, he opened his arms on the cross and shed his covenant blood for all.

Clearly we don't arrive at this Catholic, all-embracing level of artistry overnight. When learning to play the piano, one starts with easy pieces and gradually works up to the harder ones. The same is true with the art of loving: We start with the easier pieces (loving our parents, children, friends, neighbors) and slowly work up to the harder pieces—the people who are not like us.

From Feelings to Action

And this loving goes deeper than surface niceties. The loving that lies at the core of Catholic identity leads to concrete acts: embracing the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the prisoner. It requires working for peace. It involves concern for the earth. It demands justice for the poor.

And because the objects of our loving are human, limited, and sinful, our loving will most certainly entail forgiveness—both forgiving and being forgiven. We who follow Jesus are called to announce the kingdom of God by being ambassadors of reconciliation and instruments of peace.

The Eucharist is the marvelous sign of Catholic identity. The Eucharist takes us into the body of Christ. It fills us with the spirit of Christ so we can truly become Catholic, all-embracing lovers. Love is our vocation. Love is the heart of our Catholic identity. +

PRAYER

*Lord, I am grateful for your
tenderness and mercy.
Help me to change my heart and
show your love and compassion
to all people.*

—From *Grateful Meditations for Every Day
in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 4–9

Monday, St. Charles Borromeo:

Rom 11:29–36 / Lk 14:12–14

Tuesday, Weekday:

Rom 12:5–16b / Lk 14:15–24

Wednesday, Weekday:

Rom 13:8–10 / Lk 14:25–33

Thursday, Weekday:

Rom 14:7–12 / Lk 15:1–10

Friday, Weekday:

Rom 15:14–21 / Lk 16:1–8

Saturday, Dedication of the Lateran Basilica
in Rome: Ez 47:1–2, 8–9, 12 /

1 Cor 3:9c–11, 16–17 / Jn 2:13–22

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