

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time, November 3, 2019
The Desire of God's Heart for Us

In the last two days, we celebrated the feasts of All Saints and All Souls. These feasts remind us that this world is not final destination. Our final destination is heaven. The feasts of All Saints and All Souls remind us that we belong to something greater than the “here and now.” They speak of eternal life with God, the angels and all the saints. The Lord Jesus came to lead us to eternal life, if we follow Him. Hence, the theme for our homily is: “The Desire of God's Heart for Us.” Our key verse is “The Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Our Lord Jesus Christ exemplified this by his encounter with Zacchaeus, a known public sinner and a tax collector. In a sense, the Lord's coming to Zacchaeus is a [recapitulation or] replay of his embrace of each one of us. The Word of God says, “God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might have eternal life” (John 3:16). We came to alienation from God through the sin of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Through the obedience of Christ, we are restored to the right relationship with the Father. “For just as through disobedience of the one man many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of

the one man the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

The Lord’s entry into the home of Zacchaeus mirrors the condescension of the Lord in the incarnation – God took on human flesh to seek, to save us from sin and to lead us to paradise, our heavenly home. He accomplished this by laying down his life as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) and by raising it up again. The first reading from the book of Wisdom, speaking of the Lord’s way states, “You have mercy on all... you overlook the sins of your people that they may repent, because you love all things that are” (Wisdom 11:23). St Catherine of Siena alluded this, when she said,

In mercy you cleansed us in the blood; in mercy you kept company with your creatures. Oh mad Lover! It was not enough for you to take on our humanity. You had to die as well. Now, death was not enough: You descended to the depths to summon our holy ancestors and fulfill your truth and mercy in them (St Catherine of Sienna, The Dialogue 30, p.72).

The Lord does this, because he wants none of us to be lost. The Word says, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of those He has given Me, but raise them up at the last day” (John 6:39). Making this point clear to a young bishop, St Paul writes, “God our Savior desires all

men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim2:3-4). Putting it in the language of the Catechism, the Church our holy mother teaches,

Jesus calls to conversion. This call is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel This call is addressed first to those who do not yet know Christ and his Gospel. Also, Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life (CCC 1427).

This call is not only for non-believers but also for long time Christians, "Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This *second conversion* is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal"(CCC 1428, *Lumen Gentium* 8§3).

Knowing of God's desire for us to be saved, what shall we do? Zacchaeus gives us an example to follow. He opened his heart to the Lord. His attitude is a contrast to the other rich man earlier in the gospel (Luke 18:18-23) who went away sad when our Lord told him what to do in order to

inherit eternal life. He was attached to his possessions in this world. Zacchaeus was not attached to his possessions. He readily gave half of them to the poor and promised four times over restitution to anyone whom he defrauded (Luke 19:8-9).

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord is saying to us, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). Our happiness and salvation lie in opening the doors of our hearts and welcoming the Lord into our lives. How can we do this? First, repent of our sins. Second, embrace virtues of generosity and humility like Zacchaeus. Reach out to a family member or an old friend who feels that you have forgotten or wronged him. Reach out to the poorest of the poor. Defend the defenseless children in the womb. Help the aged and homebound. Advocate for the protection of the life of all. In the light of National Vocation Awareness Week (November 3-9) here in the United States, one sure-fire way of opening our heart to the Lord is to continue the saving and evangelizing mission of our Lord. Remembering his word to us, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21).

May we never forget that the heart desire of God for us is our salvation. Like the Psalmist, may each one of us say to him, “I will praise your name forever, my king and my God” (Psalm 145:1). Peace be with you!