

ZACCHEUS & OURSELVES & THOSE WHO HAVE DIED - ALL SOULS DAY
31st Sunday Ordinary Time Year C, 2nd November 2019

LIGHTING RITUAL

Tonight, we have a lighting ritual with three candles.

The First Candle, the *Memorial Candle*, is lit as we remember people in our families, friends and others we have known in life who have died.

We pause to remember them before God.

The Second Candle, the *Mourning Candle*, is lit for ourselves who still mourn in our lives for people who have died. Though we have entrusted them to God 's love and peace, we still miss them.

We pause to remember ourselves before God.

The Third Candle, the *Solidarity Candle*, is lit for those who have died and who have no one to pray for them.

We pause to remember them anonymously before God.

Earlier, during the Opening Hymn, the *Remembrance Book* entered in procession and was placed on the Table of the Eucharist.

We have placed in the Book, the names of people we wish to remember.

GOSPEL OF LUKE 19:1-10

Last week we heard the parable of the '*Pharisee and the Tax Collector*'. Jesus told this parable while on the road going from Galilee towards Jerusalem.

Now he has arrived at Jericho and will begin the climb to Jerusalem. A real person, a real tax-collector meets Jesus.

Will this be any different from the parable Jesus told?

We know his name. It is Zacchaeus.
He is an arch tax-collector, what we'd call a chief tax-collector.
He was '*plousios*' (Gk. *καὶ αὐτὸς*), which we translate as wealthy or rich.

We know he was short in stature
and had enough fitness to run and climb a sycamore tree.
He had initiative.
He climbed the tree so that he could see Jesus when he passed by.



Jesus looks and calls Zacchaeus by name. Personally.
And tells him to hurry and come down,
as he is going *'meinai'* (Gk. *δεῖ μὲ*), to remain, at his house.

Rather than popping in for a chat or for a few minutes,
we, as Christians, ask Jesus to remain, to stay with us.

We can grumble and offer excuses but notice how Zacchaeus responds.
He hurried down and – *'hupedexato auton chairon'* –welcomed Jesus with joy.

Let us read the Gospel passage together.

*'He entered Jericho and was passing through it.
A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich.
He was trying to see who Jesus was,
but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature.
So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him,
because he was going to pass that way.
When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him,
'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.'
So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him.
All who saw it began to grumble and said,
'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.'
Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord,
'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor;
and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.'
Then Jesus said to him,
**'Today salvation has come to this house,
because he too is a son of Abraham.
For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'***

The encounter with Jesus creates a change of heart in Zaccheus.
Zacchaeus decides that he will give to the poor and will reimburse anyone he has defrauded,
not once, but four times the amount.

Zacchaeus speaks to Jesus, and nearby, people are listening to him.
Zacchaeus makes a personal witness and a public witness.
Jesus sees the genuine change of heart in Zacchaeus.
He says to him,

'Today salvation has come to this house'.

He affirms him as a son of Abraham.

Then Jesus speaks of his ministry as he came to seek and to save the lost.

We share with others the times we have been lost
and how Jesus heals and saves us.

We too witness to Jesus. But not in a boastful way.

Remembering the parable of Jesus last week, we can say too,

"God, be merciful to me, a sinner".

After the encounter with Zacchaeus in Jericho,
being not far from Jerusalem,
the disciples expected that the kingdom of God would immediately to appear.
Jesus corrects them by telling another parable about faithfulness over a period of time.

REMEMBERING THOSE WHO HAVE DIED

Let us pause now to remember the witness of people
who we have known in our lives.
People we have accompanied in their palliative care journey.
People we have loved and who we lovingly remember.
People who have died and who we still need to forgive.
People who have taught us about God,
People who have influenced us and inspired us.
People who had doubted God's existence or didn't believe,
yet have met God in eternal peace and love.

PEOPLE IN NEED

People who died tragically in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday this year,
and in Iraq and Syria, South Sudan and Yemen
and other conflict zones during recent years.
People who died tragically in road accidents, in domestic violence,
in institutional violence, in drug related deaths.
People who suicided.
People who died unexpectedly from undiagnosed medical conditions.

And many other people.
We remember and accompany them in prayer
throughout this month of November.

PRAYER FOR RAIN IN THE AUSTRALIAN DROUGHT

Throughout November in Catholic Churches across Australia
we pray for rain in drought areas,
and for the people who suffer from the effects of drought,
and for those who help them.
Let us open our newsletters and pray this national prayer together.

[Pause and pray]

ZACCHEUS AND OURSELVES

Like Zaccheus, we too are invited to show initiative.
Like Zaccheus, we too are invited to witness to Jesus in our lives.
Like Zaccheus, we too welcome Jesus into our lives.
Like Zaccheus, we too are called to help others in practical ways.

As the gifts of bread and wine are prepared and offered,
may we also place before God those in our lives who have died.

May we be aware of the Communion of Saints
accompanying this Celebration of the Eucharist.

Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/110319.cfm>]

