

Homily for the 31st Sunday of Ordinary Time Year C.

WE ARE ALL ZACCHEUS...
WE HAVE COME HERE TO SEE JESUS...OR,
WE HAVE JUST FOLLOWED THE CROWD.
EITHER WAY, WHAT WE HAVE DONE
IS TO GIVE AWAY OUR POSITION,
LIKE AN UNCAUTIOUS BUCK IN HUNTING SEASON
THAT WANDERS INTO THE OPEN.
WE HAVE COME TO SEE JESUS, AND JESUS SEES US.
AS HE SAID TO ZACCHEUS,
"YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE COMING TO SEE ME, TO MY HOUSE;
RATHER, TODAY SALVATION HAS COME TO YOUR HOUSE.
TODAY I MUST REMAIN WITH YOU,
IN YOUR HOUSE, WHERE YOU ARE, AS YOU ARE."
AND SO WE CELEBRATE THE EUCHARIST,
JESUS SERVING US, EATING WITH US, SAVING US,
BEING WITH US, TODAY.
"TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE,"
HE WILL SAY TO THE THIEF ON THE CROSS,
"FOR WHERE I AM THERE IS PARADISE,
AND I AM HERE WITH YOU."

JESUS IS GOD WHO DOES NOT MAKE JUNK
AS OUR FIRST READING AFFIRMS,
AND WHO HATES NOTHING, AND SO LOVES ALL
OF WHAT HE HAS MADE.
JESUS IS GOD COME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE
THOSE WHO CONSIDER THEMSELVES JUNK,
THOSE WHO HATE THEMSELVES,
THOSE WHO ARE LOST TO THEMSELVES.
JESUS SEEKS OUT AND SEES IN TREETOPS
PEOPLE WHO DON'T FIT,
MISFITS, OUTCASTS, PEOPLE WHO DO NOT MEASURE UP
TO THE YARDSTICK OF SOCIETY,
OF THE TOWN,
OF THE CHURCH,
AND EACH OF US, ACCORDING TO OUR OWN OR SOMEONE ELSE'S YARDSTICK,

DOESN'T FIT.

JESUS CALLS ZACCHEUS A CHILD OF ABRAHAM.
DOING THAT HE GIVES THIS LOST ONE A LIFE,
HE BRINGS HIM BACK INTO RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD,
AND WITH HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
BUT TO GOD, TO JESUS, WE ARE ALL CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM.
BOTH MARY AND ZECHARIAH INCLUDE ABRAHAM
IN THEIR SONGS OF PRAISE.

ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS RECEIVED THE PROMISE OF GOD,
AND BOTH MARY AND ZECHARIAH SUM UP THE ENTIRE COVENANT
SWORN TO ABRAHAM AND HIS CHILDREN
AS MERCY.

IN THE COMING OF JESUS, WHOSE NAME MEANS SAVIOR,
GOD REMEMBERS HIS MERCY,
MERCY SWORN TO ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS FOR EVER.

IN LUKE'S GOSPEL, ONLY TWO OTHER INDIVIDUALS,
BESIDES ZACCHEUS THE TAX COLLECTOR,
ARE CONNECTED TO ABRAHAM AND HIS CHILDREN,
AND IT IS JESUS WHO MAKE THE CONNECTION.
ONE IS THE CRIPPLED WOMAN WHOM JESUS HEALED ON THE SABBATH,
AND THE OTHER IS THE POOR MAN LAZARUS.

THE WOMAN, COMING TO BE HEALED ON THE SABBATH,
WAS BREAKING THE LAW.

YET JESUS SAYS, "AS A DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM,
ISN'T IT NECESSARY THAT SHE BE HEALED ON THE SABBATH?"
BREAKING THE SABBATH IS KEEPING THE SABBATH
WHERE JESUS IS.

LAZARUS THE POOR MAN DYING
WAS BUNDLED BY THE ANGELS INTO THE BOSOM OF ABRAHAM.
THE SICK WOMAN, THE SORE ENCRUSTED LAZARUS, AND THE CHEATING TAX GATHERER
ZACCHEUS – ALL OF THESE, AND ONLY THESE, LOW DOWN PERSONS,
MERIT IN LUKE TO BE CALLED CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM BY JESUS.
JESUS SAYS SO. HE SEES THEM.
HIS SEEING THEM MAKES THEM WHO THEY REALLY ARE.

EARLIER, JOHN THE BAPTIST HAD SAID,

"GOD CAN MAKE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM EVEN
OUT OF STONES."

TO OBSERVANT AND RELIGIOUS POLITICALLY AND SOCIALLY RESPECTABLE PEOPLE, THE
WOMAN, THE POOR MAN AND THE TAX COLLECTOR WERE STONES.

THEY HAD NO REAL CLAIM ON GOD
OR ON THE GOODS OF THEIR RELIGION
OR ON MEMBERSHIP IN THEIR PEOPLE.

THEY WERE AS DEAD.

BUT, SAYS PAUL,

GOD MAKES THE DEAD LIVE AND CALLS INTO BEING
THINGS THAT WERE NOT.

AS OUR FIRST READING SAYS,

"YOU SPARE ALL, BECAUSE ALL ARE YOURS, LORD,,
LOVER OF LIFE."

ZACCHEUS' RESPONSE IS THE RESPONSE
OF ONE WHO REALIZES HE IS NOT, AFTER ALL, A STONE.
HE KNOWS THAT GOD'S UNDYING BREATH IS IN HIM, TOO,
AND SO HE CAN SPREAD HIMSELF OUT TO ALL
WITH THE SAME GRACIOUS GENEROSITY
THAT GOD HAD SPREAD OUT TO HIM.

BECAUSE HE IS SAVED, HE CAN RELEASE OTHERS.

BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN SEEN, HE CAN SEE OTHERS
WITH THE EYES OF MERCY AND LOVE.

TO EACH OF US, JESUS SAYS,

"TODAY SALVATION HAS COME TO THIS HOUSE."

TO US WHO ARE HERE HE SAYS,

"HURRY, TODAY I MUST STAY IN YOUR HOUSE,
WHERE YOU ARE."

JESUS, BE OUR GUEST.

"NO," HE ANSWERS, "YOU BE MINE."

October 28, 2007