

## 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Fr. Chris

How do you handle adversity? Most people give up quite easily. When faced with something difficult often we move on to something easier. If you think about your life were there times when you tried to play a musical instrument or take up a sport and didn't get it right away? How hard did you work at it before you decided it wasn't worth the effort?

In trying a sport or in taking up a hobby of any kind it might be prudent to give it up if you don't have the amount of time needed to master it. But when the adversity is in working through a difficult relationship, handling an addiction or compulsion, or dealing with some kind of conflict, giving up doesn't make the problem go away. It just gets hidden for awhile to come back again. St. Paul told his church at Thessalonica not to be discouraged by people who insisted that the end was near. He didn't want them giving up and simply waiting for the end to come. There was much to do before that time arrived. The message of hope must be proclaimed to the world. It would never do just to sit and wait. Likewise, some of the members of the community were dividing the church by insisting that people had to choose sides. They had to decide whether to trust Paul as their leader or someone else. Paul reminded them that divisions and difficulties will come. Don't give up, but use this time as a preparation for the final conflict with Satan.

Zacchaeus was a man that knew adversity. He was tax collector and so much of that adversity he brought on himself. In the role of tax collector he was despised by all of the Israelites. He was an outcast by his own people. On top of that he was wealthy. Most likely he gained much of that wealth by charging more than was required for the tax. He was allowed to keep anything collected over the amount he had to forward to Rome.

Then, Zacchaeus meet Jesus. His life is turned upside down. He probably knew of Christ by seeing him perform miracles of healing. He may have heard some of Jesus' teachings. It could be that some of the people told him about this rabbi. In any case when Jesus makes his way to Jericho Zacchaeus doesn't want to miss an opportunity to see him for himself. Unfortunately, Zacchaeus is a short man. No one is going to save him a

place near the edge of the road to see Jesus. Yet, Zacchaeus stood his ground. IT was worth the risk of embarrassment and ridicule to meet this man that he had heard so much about.

When Jesus came upon him he told Zacchaeus that he wanted to stay with him that very day. Now Jesus is on the receiving end of abuse. The people wonder why Jesus would give the time of day to someone so sinful like a tax collector. Jesus saw within this man and knew there was a restlessness there. Zacchaeus wanted to change. Jesus would help him do that. Jesus stays with Zacchaeus and tells him that God loves him. It is in the context of the meal and the conversation that takes place that Zacchaeus knows that he must not treat people with disdain even if they have treated him that way. He makes a profound and radical conversion by meeting Jesus

Then Zacchaeus does something unheard of. He declares that he is a changed man. He will repay everyone that he has cheated. He declares that he will not defraud anyone and that he will be a faithful servant of Yahweh. He will give away half of what he has to the poor. This public declaration will not be easy to back down from. If after the excitement of the moment wears off he decides not to fulfill his promise everyone will know. They will also despise him all the more. Yet, if he fulfills his promise he will no longer be a wealthy man. Can he do that?

Standing up to adversity no matter how it comes always has a price. It might mean rejection like Zacchaeus received before meeting Christ. It might mean being ridiculed like Jesus was when he chose to spend time with Zacchaeus. It might mean a complete change of life like Zacchaeus made after being touched by the presence of Christ. It most certainly will require courage. How does one judge whether it is right to stand up to adversity? If being ridiculed for doing something just or right then one should persevere. To preserve a greater good one can tolerate present difficulty. One should not give up on a spouse or child even if it would be easier to do so. Living out the faith and striving for holiness will merit some ridicule from society. That is fine. Pray for insight and wisdom to know when to persevere and when to let go.

### READINGS OF THE WEEK

Wisdom: 11:23-12:3 2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:2

Luke 18:1-10

November 3, 2013

## 主、祢 憐 憫 眾 生

陳 日 君 樞 機 主 教

本主日的福音很生動地給我們描繪了一位人物：匝凱。他是稅吏長，他是富有的人，他身材矮小。

耶穌經過他那裡，他好奇想看看耶穌，就前往奔跑攀上了一棵野桑樹。看來相當滑稽，他也似乎有些失了體統。

猶太人對這樣的一個人肯定沒有甚麼好感：他是一個典型的罪人！但他這次滑稽的行動卻可能博得旁人的同情在嗤笑之餘或許也會欣賞他某種情度的童真，使他忘記了自己「權貴」和「富翁」的身份。

匝凱的回應相當「誇張」：「我把我財產的一半施捨給窮人，我如果欺騙過誰，我就以四倍賠償。」(看來他的財產不全是不義之財) 講到錢，匝凱是認真的，他不像伯多祿在耶穌顯聖容時信口開河說：「我要為祢們三位搭三個帳棚。」那是空頭支票，聖經也說他「不知所謂」。看來匝凱是有信用的「牙齒當金使」。耶穌改變了他的人生觀。「人子來是為尋找及拯救迷失了的人……今天救恩臨到了這一家，因為他也是亞巴郎之子。」

今天的第一篇讀經說：「天主……祢憐憫眾生……愛一切所有，不恨祢所造的……祢愛惜萬物，因為都是祢的。」匝凱和世上每一個人，每一個罪人都是天主的義子，祂的聖子為每個人完成了救恩。

天主「普遍救人的意旨」無疑是梵二大公會議後愈來愈肯定的真理。用今天讀經二、得撒洛尼後書的詞彙，我們可以稱之為「普遍的召叫」。天主叫人存在，召叫他接受祂的友誼。如果人「相稱祂的召叫，讓祂以祂的德能成全他樂意向善的心和信德的行為」，那末「主耶穌的名字會在人的身上受光榮，人賴天主的恩寵也受光榮」。「天主的光榮就是活生生的人」。

天主「召叫」眾人，又以祂的德能和恩寵「成全」人的回應，這回應的第一步是「樂意向善」，第二是信德的行為。

匝凱想看看耶穌，其實多數出於好奇，怎麼稱得是「樂意向善」？不過是一個唯利是圖的守財奴，放下謀利的心態，做一件無利可圖的事，已是一個突破，是一種解放，是開了一個窗口，讓一股新鮮空氣吹進來。

青少年除了讀書也該栽培一些興趣，一些健康的嗜好，這樣他們的胸會更開朗，自殺的案件一定會大大減少。「非功利化」已是「樂意向善」的第一步！

接觸了耶穌的人不能不變，匝凱已是一個新人，錢已不是他生命中最高的價值，那末，他的行為是否已是「信德的行為」？他好像並沒有宣認耶穌為默西亞或天主子。不過耶穌很肯定說：救恩已到了匝凱的家。

其實，正如人不會白白離棄天主，而是為了貪戀世物才離棄天主；同樣，人離棄世物也就是因為他已找到天主，雖然或許還叫不出祂的名字，但他的行動的方向已轉向天主。

在我們的周圍有很多這樣的匝凱，我們要欣賞他們，鼓勵他們在近人身上事奉天主，受惠的人會帶他們認識真天主，真救主。

摘自「公教報」

## 本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 三 年 十 一 月 三 日

智 11:23-12:3 ; 得後 1:11-2:2 ; 路 19:1-10