

31st Sunday of the Year C

You love all that exists, you hold nothing of what you have made in abhorrence, for had you hated anything, you would not have formed it. (Ws 11:24)



First Reading

Wisdom 11:22 – 12:2

In your sight, Lord, the whole world is like a grain of dust that tips the scales, like a drop of morning dew falling on the ground. Yet you are merciful to all, because you can do all things and overlook men's sins so that they can repent. Yes, you love all that exists, you hold nothing of what you have made in abhorrence, for had you hated anything, you would not have formed it. And how, had you not willed it, could a thing persist, how be conserved if not called forth by you? You spare all things because all things are yours, Lord, lover of life, you whose imperishable spirit is in all. Little by little, therefore, you correct those who offend, you admonish and remind them of how they have sinned, so that they may abstain from evil and trust in you, Lord.

Second Reading

2 Thessalonians 1:11 – 2:2

We pray continually that our God will make you worthy of his call and by his power fulfil all your desires for goodness and complete all that you have been doing through faith; because in this way the name of our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified in you and you in him, by the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

To turn now, brothers and sisters, to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we shall all be gathered round him: please do not get excited too soon or alarmed by any prediction or rumour or any letter claiming to come from us, implying that the Day of the Lord has already arrived.

Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the town when a man whose name was Zacchaeus made his appearance; he was one of the senior tax collectors and a wealthy man. He was anxious to see what kind of man Jesus was, but he was too short and could not see him for the crowd; so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus who was to pass that way. When Jesus reached the spot he looked up and spoke to him: "Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I must stay at your house today." And he hurried down and welcomed him joyfully. They all complained when they saw what was happening. "He has gone to stay at a sinner's house" they said. But Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to the Lord, "Look, sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek out and save what was lost."

Meditation

This reading from Luke's gospel is the passage most often proclaimed at the dedication of a church building or at the annual celebration of that event. Catholics have traditionally termed their worship spaces the "house of God". The story of Zacchaeus teaches us the authentic meaning of that title. The church building is the "house of God" only when the assembly there gathered is a community continually called to conversion by the experience of Jesus present among them at table.

There is no recorded instance of Jesus refusing an invitation to share food and drink. On this occasion he even invites himself. More surprisingly, in the midst of a city of "true believers" he chooses the house of an outcast. But this outcast has gone out of his way to catch a glimpse of Jesus.

The table is the privileged place of conversion and reconciliation. In sharing food and drink with the source of all life, Zacchaeus comes to a deeper sense of his own sin than he would ever know in an introspective examination of conscience. Thus does salvation come to his house and ours.