

Questions that today's gospel asks of me –

1. Have I ever made a fool of myself? Of course I have. It's what comes next that matters. I have at times pretended it didn't really happen or I learned to smile and admit it.
2. Have I ever gone out on a limb for someone or something I believed in? Maybe but not as much as I would like to acknowledge.

This charming little story of Zacchaeus has much to teach us. Why did he take the chance of making a fool of himself and going out on a limb?

Luke puts it simply, "Zaccheus... was seeking to see who Jesus was... He climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus..." Zaccheus had a good life. He must have been content but he was not happy. He wanted to see Jesus, to have a direct experience with Jesus.

Am I happy with Jesus in my life or just content? Do I really want to see Jesus? Now, of course, I am not going to see him physically with my bodily eyes. But with the eyes of faith, I can have a direct experience of Jesus. He is alive in our midst. Jesus is here in our assembly when we gather together as a community, women and men, black and white, rich and poor. Jesus is alive and present when the Word of God is proclaimed. Jesus is alive and present as he often was in the gospel stories, with Zaccheus, and many others, when he sat down to have a meal with them. We are gathered in the Eucharist to have a meal with Jesus in which he shares himself with us and we are called to share our lives with one another.

The sexual abuse crisis has been called the greatest crisis to confront the church since the Protestant Reformation hundreds of years ago. Our faith has been shaken by the sins and failings of those who professed to lead us to holiness. The faith of others has been shaken by the discrimination they observe in the church towards women.

It seems to be that we have to get back to basics. If being a Christian and a Catholic Christian are to mean anything, it all has to be based on Jesus Christ. We want to see who Jesus is. This once might have been a passive affair – come to church, obey a few traditions, profess a common faith. This might have made us content Christians – we were doing what we were told. But were we happy Christians, happy followers of Jesus?

One couple who used to share the Eucharist with us regularly no longer comes anymore. The reason they gave is that they do not get anything out of it. But what do you bring to it? Are you climbing a tree in order to see Jesus? We gather here with each other to give worship to our Creator, to give glory and praise to a God who loves us and calls us to life. What a privilege. Heed the words from today's reading from Wisdom:

“Lord, you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. How would anything have endured if you did not will it? ... You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living.”

God is a God who is crazy in love. Do you feel that craziness? The life of Jesus is God's proof of God's love. And so we need to know Jesus. We need to see Jesus. We need to pray the scriptures to know them in order to know Jesus.

Jesus says to each one of us what he said to Zacchaeus, “I must stay at your house today.” I want to be one with you in your heart. It doesn't matter what we have done in life so far. Jesus invites us to come down out of the tree and receive him with joy. We no longer try to please God with our good lives in order to please God. No, we live good lives because we know we are loved, that Jesus' presence has brought salvation to our house. Do we receive him with joy? Do you want to see Jesus?

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