



October 30, 2016

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time
100th Anniversary Celebration of St Anne Church

For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made...

Wisdom 11:24



Dear Friends;

There is a saying, “Do not judge a book by its cover.” Too often we judge people by their appearance, job, race or social class, education, etc. We forget how wonderfully complex we all are. We get lazy and want to reduce people to simple categories, label them and be done with them. But the God of Jesus invites us to engage others in love not in judgment. Things may be more than they appear on the surface.

Sometimes the only exercise people get is jumping to conclusions. The story of Zacchaeus is one of those situations where people have jumped to conclusions. It is not Zacchaeus who needs conversion it is the crowd who need conversion.

The name “Zacchaeus” means “pure” or “clean.” Luke tells us he was a rich man. He would have to be rich to be the chief tax collector. The Romans in Palestine would use Jews to collect taxes to support their ongoing occupation and governance of the region. The Romans put out to bid the right to collect the tolls. When the bid was accepted, the collector paid Rome in full for the tolls of the region. Then it was up to him to try and recoup the money, and if possible make a slight profit. His agents would collect the tolls. Few tax collectors managed to recover their investment and fewer still made a profit.

The tax collectors were hated because they associated with the Roman occupiers. They were really in a difficult position. Zacchaeus because of his position is written off by the crowd as a collaborator and sinner. They thought he was unworthy of Jesus’ attention. Yet Jesus is going to make the self-righteous see Zacchaeus for the good man that he is. Jesus announces that he will go to his house. The people murmur that if Jesus were a prophet he would know what sort of person this little man is. The irony is Jesus does know. He also knows what kind of people the crowd is as well.

Tough little Zacchaeus is not going to be bullied by this mob of sanctimonious hypocrites. He stands his ground and tells them what he does with his money. The Greek text uses the ongoing present tense to say that Zacchaeus regularly gives half of his wealth to the poor. And he says “if” he has cheated anyone he will pay them back. It does not say he has cheated but “if” he inadvertently cheated he will pay back 400 percent. Jewish law only required restoration of the amount plus 20 percent interest. Roman law only required the 400 percent of a convicted criminal. Zacchaeus has surpassed the requirements of the Torah and met the most stringent terms of Roman law. The self-righteous are put to shame by the generosity of Zacchaeus. Jesus proclaims him to be a true child of Abraham. To be a true child of Abraham is measured not by our status or position in society. It is measured by our love and generosity. Love must be our focus.

This week we celebrate 100 years as a parish community. For many years we were like Zacchaeus, the least in stature among the parishes on the edge of the diocese of Oakland. We were a small rural community but rich in faith and love. Over the years the parish has grown considerably from a dozen Portuguese and Italian farm families to over 1400 richly diverse families. One thing has not changed we are rich in faith and love. Our faith and love flows out into the compassion and generosity our community shows to those who are in need.

I would like to thank our Bishop Michael Barber and our emeritus Bishop John Cummins for their presence with us for this celebration. Also thanks to the people of St Anne Church past, present, living and deceased. May our patron St Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary and grandmother of Jesus pray that we persevere in faith and love on our journey to the reign of God!

Peace,

Fr. Ron

Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: www.stannechurchbyron.com