



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

October 2, 2022

The Faith of Humble Servants

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

What's the difference between a believer and an atheist? What separates one who is indifferent to religion from a religious person? Faith! To believe is no small thing and a huge gift. "Father, you're lucky you have faith!" an atheist friend once told me. "I have tried, but I can't believe."

We believers are indeed lucky, because having faith in Jesus opens us up to heaven, to life after death, to finding hope and meaning in suffering. Faith allows us to trust

something bigger than ourselves and to be at peace even when all around us is crazy. Faith and acceptance is the difference between interior harmony and frustration.

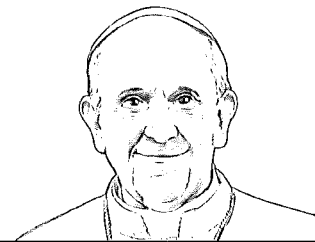
We have received everything from God, which is why Jesus invites us to have the attitude of humble servants. He uses an example that is clear to his listeners: a servant works hard all day and then comes home and prepares and serves dinner. In so doing, he is merely performing his job. Jesus isn't endorsing the insensitive nature of the master but offering a model of the humble servant who faithfully fulfills his position. Since he receives everything from the master, he can only be grateful for the opportunity to work. Such is our position before God. We have no place being proud or demanding before God because all we have is from him: life, family, health, our talents. All are his gifts to us. +

*We have received everything
from God, which is why
Jesus invites us to have the
attitude of humble servants.*

A Word from Pope Francis

The firm rejection of the death penalty shows to what extent it is possible to recognize the inalienable dignity of every human being and to accept that he or she has a place in this universe. If I do not deny that dignity to the worst of criminals, I will not deny it to anyone.

FRATELLI TUTTI (ENCYCLICAL), 269,
OCTOBER 3, 2020



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What does being humble look like to me?
- In what situations do I need to cultivate the virtue of humility?

Sunday Readings

Hebrews 1:2-3; 2:2-4

[God] spoke to us through a son, ...through whom he created the universe.

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control.

Luke 17:5-10

[Jesus said,] "When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"

All Lives Are Sacred, Even the Guilty Ones

By Fr. Rick Potts, CSsR

October is Respect Life Month. What does it mean to be pro-life? Some people would move heaven and earth to convince a desperate, frightened mother not to kill her unborn baby but would not consider trying to convince a court to spare the life of a convicted murderer. The reasoning goes something like this: An unborn child is innocent; a convicted murderer is guilty. But aren't we missing a key teaching of the Catholic faith? Each life may not be innocent, but each life is sacred (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2258).

During his 1999 visit to St. Louis, Pope John Paul II called for us to be pro-life in *all* issues, including the death penalty, which he called “cruel and unnecessary.” And in 2018, in a letter to the bishops of the Church, Pope Francis explained his approval of the revision of the *Catechism*: “The death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.”

Yet when I speak against the death penalty, someone inevitably asks, “But what if someone in your family were murdered? How would you feel then?” In the heat of the moment, my personal and emotional response would probably be to get revenge.

But the death penalty is not the



emotional, personal, or impulsive response of a distraught victim; it's the measured and calculated response of the state. The state doesn't lose its temper; the state doesn't act on impulse. The state is supposed to embody the ideal, to represent the best of us. Granted, the state has the responsibility to protect its citizens and maintain peace, but it is possible to separate dangerous people from the rest of the population without putting them to death. And in some cases, science and faith make it possible for us to transform their hearts and give them the hope of rehabilitation and redemption.

Maybe if we could protect the guilty, defense of the innocent would follow. After all, even a murderer was once an unborn child. Does life cease to be sacred once we're born? Does sin erase the fact that God created that life and sent his Son to redeem that person? Didn't Jesus die for that person's sins as well?

God said, “I am the LORD your God...You shall not kill” (Exodus 20:2a, 13). We quickly added exceptions (see Exodus 21–22). But Jesus proclaimed if we are angry with others, we “will be liable to judgment” (Matthew 5:22).

For our words to have validity when we speak in defense of the unborn, we must speak in defense of all life. +

But what if someone in your family is murdered?

PRAYER

Gracious God, enlighten our minds and open our hearts so we may humbly receive the message of your truth. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 3–8

Monday, Weekday:

Gal 1:6–12 / Lk 10:25–37

Tuesday, St. Francis of Assisi:

Gal 1:13–24 / Lk 10:38–42

Wednesday, Weekday:

Gal 2:1–2, 7–14 / Lk 11:1–4

Thursday, Weekday:


Gal 3:1–5 / Lk 11:5–13

Friday, Our Lady of the Rosary:

Gal 3:7–14 / Lk 11:15–26

Saturday, Weekday:

Gal 3:22–29 / Lk 11:27–28

Bringing Home
the Word 
October 2, 2022

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Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

October 9, 2022

Paid with a Glass of Milk

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

A young Howard Kelly was poor and hungry, knocking on doors for a bit of charity. At the last door, discouraged with so little response that day, he merely asked for a glass of water from the young girl who opened the door. Realizing he was more than thirsty, she brought him a glass of milk. He asked what he owed her and she responded, "Nothing. Mother has taught us never to accept pay for a kindness." Little Howard responded simply: "Then I thank you from my heart."

Years later, the girl who gave milk

to Howard had become a seriously ill, middle-aged woman. She was transferred to the city hospital and treated by a successful specialist. After months of treatment and medication, she overcame the disease and returned home. When the bill arrived, she feared to open it because, although not totally poor, she was of humble means. Upon opening the envelope, she found this message on the bill: "Paid in full with one glass of milk. Dr. Howard Kelly."

Our acts of kindness never go unpaid, and a little love goes a long way toward transforming the world. True gratitude is never just a word on the lips but a lifestyle and an attitude of a noble heart. A grateful-hearted person knows that everything is a gift, and we should, in turn, give to those around us. Our biggest benefactor is God himself, our Creator, who has given us life, love, and eternal salvation. May he be the first one to whom we express our gratitude! +

Our acts of kindness never go unpaid, and a little love goes a long way toward transforming the world.

A Word from Pope Francis

The prayer of thanksgiving always begins from...the recognition that grace precedes us. We were thought of before we learned how to think; we were loved before we learned how to love; we were desired before our hearts conceived a desire. If we view life like this, then "thank you" becomes the driving force of our day.

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ROME,
DECEMBER 30, 2020



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- How often do I thank people?
- When I can't say thank you in words, do I express it with a smile, gesture, or act of kindness?

Sunday Readings

2 Kings 5:14-17

[Naaman said,] "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant."

2 Timothy 2:8-13

The word of God is not chained.

Luke 17:11-19

[Jesus said,] "Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?...Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."

Saving Grace

By Stephen Rehrauer, CSsR

I was eating lunch at a local diner with a group of friends recently. As we prayed our customary grace over the food, a group in their twenties at the next table began conversing in voices so loud it was obvious they meant for us to hear their comments. The gist of their remarks was that it seems stupid to thank God for something we have earned and paid for through our own effort and hard work.

My normal reaction to this type of comment would be to chalk it up to arrogance. However, that morning I had read Pope Benedict's encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth), which strongly emphasizes the need to recover a sense of the giftedness of our lives—an awareness that has been lost within some people in contemporary social life. His point became much more real to me as I witnessed a concrete manifestation of the very ingratitude he was talking about.

Self-sufficiency is one of the most prized values in the American psyche. It goes hand in hand with our emphasis on individual initiative, personal goal setting, and the strong work ethic that has helped make our nation successful. Properly understood and lived, tempered, and ordered by concern for the common good and for others, self-sufficiency often leads to



a strong moral character, innovation, creativity, and security.

But as Christians, we should also keep our accomplishments and individuality in proper perspective. There is a moral need to thank God and others for what we have “earned by our own efforts.” Our very existence is a gift to us from God that we did not and cannot ever earn. If not for the many others who took care of us, provided for us, protected us, and sacrificed for us, we could not have even survived the first years of our lives. Were it not for our health, our intelligence, our education, our physical and mental energy, our

personal and social opportunities—none of which we can take sole credit for and all of which have been given to us by God through the help of other people—we would not have what we do today. Even at lunch in the diner that day, were it not for the work of the people who grew the food, brought it to market, bought it and carried it to the restaurant, and prepared it and served it to us, our meal together would not have been possible. Just the simple act of saying grace, thanking God, maybe mentioning the farmers and the cooks, reminds us to be grateful for the unearned love of God and the work of others. +

There is a moral need to thank God and others for what we have “earned by our own efforts.”

**PRAYER**

*Generous and loving God,
source of all blessings,
please give us the grace
of humble gratitude and
unstinting generosity.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 10–15

Monday, Weekday: Gal 4:22–24,
26–27, 31—5:1 / Lk 11:29–32


Tuesday, Weekday:
Gal 5:1–6 / Lk 11:37–41

Wednesday, Weekday:
Gal 5:18–25 / Lk 11:42–46

Thursday, Weekday:
Eph 1:1–10 / Lk 11:47–54

Friday, Weekday:
Eph 1:11–14 / Lk 12:1–7

Saturday, St. Teresa of Jesus:
Eph 1:15–23 / Lk 12:8–12

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Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
October 16, 2022

Prayer: A Powerful Battle

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Water cuts through rock, not because of its power, but because of its persistence. As believing Christians, persistence is one of the key virtues to our life of prayer. We will penetrate the solid rock of our faith, which is Christ, only through regular and relentless prayer. Saint Luke makes this clear when he reveals Jesus' intention in telling this parable "about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary" (Luke 18:1). Jesus wants us to keep at it in prayer. The *Catechism of the*

Catholic Church has an entire section devoted to prayer with the intriguing title "The Battle of Prayer." After 2,000 years of experience, the Church sums up the theme of prayer as a battle! Moses might have said the same thing, for his perseverance in prayer was reflected in the battle with Amalek.

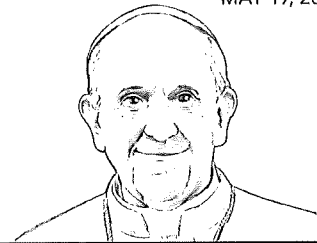
The truth is, God doesn't entrust the treasures of his friendship to just anyone who says to him, "Lord, Lord." He knows the fickleness of the human heart but also knows that fidelity over time is the evidence of sincere love. He longs for the hearts of his children to seek him, but he also knows that for them to reach full maturity in him, growth in prayer must be steady. God is not at all like the unscrupulous judge of the Gospel. That is exactly Jesus' point. If God is literally dying to reconcile with us, then so much more will he respond to us if we are persistent in praying to him. +

*As believing Christians,
persistence is one of the key
virtues to our life of prayer.*

A Word from Pope Francis

Do not forget the prayer that asks "why?". It is the prayer of children when they begin not to understand things,... because the child asks his father, "Daddy, why? Daddy, why? Daddy, why?" But let us be careful: the child does not listen to his father's answer. The father starts to reply, but the child interrupts with another "why?"

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ROME,
MAY 19, 2021



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I as persistent in prayer as I am in pursuing other life goals?
- What would help my prayer life?

Sunday Readings

Exodus 17:8–13

Moses' hands, however, grew tired; so....Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other.

2 Timothy 3:14—4:2

Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it.

Luke 18:1–8

[Jesus] told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary.

Pray Always

By Paige Byrne Shortal

Pray always. That's the message of today's Gospel and the first reading from the Book of Exodus. When you think about it, it's kind of an amazing teaching. Prayer is where our little and limited selves meet the all-knowing, the all-powerful, the anything-but-little-and-limited Creator of all things, the Force behind all that is.

I would think the message would be more like, "What do you know? Hush up and let God be in charge!" But that's not what the Scriptures say. We are to pray *persistently*. Moses is to stand with his arms raised in prayer and if he falters, the Israelites begin to lose the battle. The community, in the form of Moses' brother, Aaron, and their friend, Hur, help Moses persist by holding his hands aloft. In the Gospel, Jesus says we should pray like the woman who won't stop nagging until she gets what she wants. (My children claim she is my patron saint.)

But how realistic is "pray always"? Consider that most of us have an inner prayer going on all the time, but too often it's more like an inner whine: "I want this. I want that. Give me. Help me. Please, please, please."

What would happen if we consciously directed our inner whine to God and called it prayer? We might become aware of all the prayers



directed to God from people all over the world who are sick or suffering or in danger, who are afraid of dying, who simply love their children and want what's best for them. Then we might realize that we are not alone. We might learn to attend to today's task and not borrow trouble for tomorrow. We might trust that for every loss, there is a gain; for every death, a resurrection. We might come to know how often our desire for something else is preventing us from noticing and relishing the good presented to us each and every moment.

Directing that inner whine to God

may help us identify our deepest desires. It is in these desires that we come to know our true self. And we may come to know the good God in whose image that true self—and the true self of every human being—was created. If, like Moses, we get tired, then we can lean on the community, as he leaned on Aaron and Hur. We can rely on our community of faith to stand beside us and lift us up in prayer.

Let us pray! +

What would happen if we consciously directed our inner whine to God and called it prayer?

PRAYER

Faithful God, forgive us our lack of constancy and inspire us in our prayer that we may come to know and love you and your people. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 17–22

Monday, St. Ignatius of Antioch:
Eph 2:1–10 / Lk 12:13–21


Tuesday, St. Luke:
2 Tm 4:10–17b / Lk 10:1–9

Wednesday, Sts. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues and Companions:
Eph 3:2–12 / Lk 12:39–48

Thursday, Weekday:
Eph 3:14–21 / Lk 12:49–53

Friday, Weekday:
Eph 4:1–6 / Lk 12:54–59

Saturday, Weekday:
Eph 4:7–16 / Lk 13:1–9

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October 16, 2022

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Bringing Home the Word

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

October 23, 2022

A Simple Sinner, or Simply a Sinner?

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Scholars tell us that no other Gospel talks more about prayer than St. Luke's. Last Sunday's Gospel insisted that we persevere in our prayer. This week we are admonished to pray with humility and sincerity of heart. The prayer of a humble soul does pierce the clouds and rises to the throne of God (see Sirach 35:21).

The Pharisee, Jesus' example of pride, doesn't kneel, bow his head, or sit listening for God's word. Rather, he "takes up his position" and speaks

a prayer "to himself," listing all of his sacrifices and virtues, apparently as evidence of how much he deserves God's blessings. We can almost read in his words the conviction of how lucky God is to have a Pharisee like him.

In contrast, the tax collector, considered by the Jews to be a sinner and collaborator with evil, slips into the back of the temple. He won't even lift his eyes up to God, as he is ashamed and keenly aware of his unworthiness. He only recalls his sins, beats his chest in penance, and asks for mercy. And, we are told, he goes home "justified." This is the power of humility before God. It is the necessary condition of our salvation and justification.

When we observe someone with Pharisaic presumption it produces in us an interior rejection. Yet, when we witness the vulnerability and self-effacement of one who admits weakness, we are moved to compassion and ready to forgive. If we who are imperfect respond like this, how much more will God respond with mercy to even the most hardened sinners who pray to him with a sincere heart? +

***Humility is necessary
to our salvation.***

A Word from Pope Francis

How many times do those who are prominent...raise up walls to increase distances, making other people feel even more rejected? Or by considering them backward and of little worth, they despise their traditions, erase their history, occupy their lands, and usurp their goods....Alleged superiority, ...oppression and exploitation, exist today!

HOMILY, ROME, OCTOBER 27, 2019



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I more like the self-righteous Pharisee or the humble tax collector?
- Do I think of myself as superior to anyone? Who? Why?

Sunday Readings

Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

Give to the Most High as he has given to you, generously, according to your means.

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

[Paul said,] "I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith."

Luke 18:9-14

[Jesus] then addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else.

Harvesting Our Blessings

By Valerie Schultz

Today, when peaches and watermelon are plentiful at any grocery store in January, asparagus is available in August, and grapes are a year-round food staple, it can be difficult to appreciate the importance of the seasonal harvest during the time of Jesus. Jesus lived closer to the earth than we do in third-millennial America. The harvest was *the* essential indicator of the quality of your nutritional life for the rest of the year; indeed, it foretold whether you would be able to feed your family at all. A good harvest was a time of festivals and thanksgiving for all God had brought to fruition.

When our children were young, we planted a garden every spring. While we were never able to sustain ourselves with what we grew (there were times, in fact, when I think it would have been cheaper to buy the amount we harvested at the grocery store), the care and cultivation of our produce taught us patience.

The long summer of watering and weeding taught us that delayed gratification is the sweetest fruit. Even the pests who sometimes stole our vegetables had a lesson to teach us: share! Learning how things grew—berries on vines, apples on trees, carrots underground—helped our children appreciate the wonder of our



God-given earth. They learned there is no such thing as a cupcake bush and that nothing tastes better than a ripe raspberry still warm from the sun.

Parables of the harvest abound in the Gospels. Beloved are the stories of the sower and the seed that fell on different soils (Luke 8:4–15); of the separation of the grain from the weeds (Matthew 13:24–30); of the tiny mustard seed (Matthew 13:31–32); of the withered fig tree (Mark 11:20–24); of the vine and the branches (John 15:1–8). “By their fruits you will know them,” says Jesus (Matthew 7:20).

We gardeners relate to the biblical harvest. We know a garden can bring an embarrassment of riches. Friends

shake their heads at our recurring baskets of tomatoes. Neighbors close their blinds when we approach with an armload of zucchini. The freezer groans under the weight of frozen herbs and fruits. We are so rich, so blessed!

The harvest is a Christian metaphor for the blessings we reap when we give our lives to Christ. The light of faith ripens us as we age. If we are gardeners of love, the harvest of a life of following Jesus yields a generous bounty of compassion, kindness, and care for our neighbor. “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few” (Matthew 9:37), says Jesus, calling us to labor in his harvest. Our response to that call makes all the difference. +

*If we are gardeners of love,
the harvest of a life
of following Jesus yields
a generous bounty
of compassion, kindness,
and care for our neighbor.*

PRAYER

*Forgiving God, when we are
tempted to imagine ourselves
superior to others, please
gently correct us and help us
see others as you see them.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 24–29

Monday, Weekday:
Eph 4:32–5:8 / Lk 13:10–17


Tuesday, Weekday:
Eph 5:21–33 / Lk 13:18–21

Wednesday, Weekday:
Eph 6:1–9 / Lk 13:22–30

Thursday, Weekday:
Eph 6:10–20 / Lk 13:31–35

Friday, Sts. Simon and Jude:
Eph 2:19–22 / Lk 6:12–16

Saturday, Weekday:
Phil 1:18b–26 / Lk 14:1, 7–11

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Bringing Home the Word

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
October 30, 2022

Becoming Attentive Travelers

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem and passes through the town of Jericho. His intention was to move right through town, yet when he catches sight of Zacchaeus, he stops. Jesus was on the move, yet not so obsessed with plans and objectives that he didn't notice the needy soul of Zacchaeus peering down upon him from the branches of a sycamore tree.

Part of being an apostle of Christ is having a heart that is always attuned to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. We

cannot be so consumed with our plans that we miss opportunities to attend to those on our path.

Zacchaeus was a public sinner, a publican, a man among the hated tax collectors and collaborators of the Romans. Rather than a person to visit he was, for the Jews, someone to be shunned. Not for Jesus! He came to seek and save the lost. And Zacchaeus wanted to be found. He was so driven to see Jesus, he made himself look ridiculous by climbing a tree, admitting to his short stature and curiosity.

How many souls along our path are showing their unquenchable thirst to discover Jesus and, even more, to be discovered by him? Some, while amassing worldly riches, realize their deep hunger can only be satisfied by something else. Only spiritual goods can satiate the Spirit. Let's be willing to go off-road and facilitate these encounters with Jesus—of course, after we ourselves have been encountered by him. +

We must never be so consumed with plans that we miss opportunities to attend to those on our path.

A Word from Pope Francis

How many people even today persist in an ill-chosen life because they have found no one willing to look at them in a different way, with the eyes, or better, with the heart of God, that is, to look at them *with hope*? Jesus instead sees a possibility for resurrection even in those who have amassed many mistaken choices.

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ROME,
AUGUST 9, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I as curious, as eager, as humble as Zacchaeus?
- Would I have interrupted my plans to encounter Zacchaeus?

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 11:22—12:2

You love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for you would not fashion what you hate.

2 Thessalonians 1:11—2:2

We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling.

Luke 19:1—10

[Jesus said to Zacchaeus,] "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

O, When the Saints...

By Paige Byrne Shortal

Do teachers in Catholic elementary schools still invite children to come to school on Halloween dressed as their favorite saint or Bible character? They did in my children's school. My youngest once chose Zacchaeus—an easy choice for this shortest boy in the class.

Kids like this story we hear in today's Gospel. Zacchaeus is easy to picture: a short guy so eager to see Jesus that he climbs a tree. He's the "chief tax collector," which means he's good at his job—collecting taxes from the Jews to pay the Romans. And he's wealthy, which means he's been skimming off the top. That's how tax collectors made their living—they were not paid a salary but instead kept whatever they could collect above what was owed. So he was probably not a real popular fellow, either. Imagine when it's time to pay your taxes if, instead of an impersonal form to fill out, there is an actual person knocking on your door and holding out a hand for your money. And because taxes have always been confusing, and no one knows what they really owe, you would have to give Zacchaeus whatever he told you to pay. No, he would not have been well-liked.

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but what happened is that Jesus saw him.



Really saw him: a lonely man; a rich man who isn't too proud to climb a tree; curious and eager; a man ready for conversion. Jesus does not ignore him as others do but invites himself to dinner. Maybe that's something else children like about this story: we all long to be noticed, to be seen not only as we are, but especially as we long to be.

This simple act of Jesus prompts the well-off Zacchaeus to become generous. And that's another thing we like about the Zacchaeus story—the quick finish. He hears the message of Jesus and applies it to himself immediately.

Isn't that the difference between

most of us and the great saints? Most of us hear the gospel truth about being poor in spirit and loving one another and taking up our cross and that camel/needle thing and we respond, "OK, sounds good...you go first." Not Zacchaeus and not those who get to use the title "Saint" before their name; those whose lives we celebrate this week on All Saints' Day. If we want to live in the company of the saints, then we had best be about applying the gospel truth to our own lives... immediately. +

The story of Zacchaeus the repentant tax collector is the story of the salvific mission of Jesus.



Merciful God, help us to be like Zacchaeus, who was eager to know Jesus; and like Jesus, who noticed those whom others shunned. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 31–November 5

Monday, Weekday:

Phil 2:1–4 / Lk 14:12–14

Tuesday, All Saints' Day:

Rv 7:2–4, 9–14 / 1 Jn 3:1–3 / Mt 5:1–12a

Wednesday, All the Faithful Departed

(All Souls' Day): Wis 3:1–9 / Rom 6:3–9 / Jn 6:37–40

Thursday, Weekday:


Phil 3:3–8a / Lk 15:1–10

Friday, St. Charles Borromeo:

Phil 3:17–4:1 / Lk 16:1–8

Saturday, Weekday:

Phil 4:10–19 / Lk 16:9–15

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