

After the Heart of Jesus ...

*"Zacchaeus, come down quickly,
for today I must stay at your house."*

*"Today salvation has come to this house
because this man too is a descendant of Abraham.
For the Son of Man has come to seek
and to save what was lost."*



Jesus' powerful actions and words in this Sunday's Gospel encounter with Zacchaeus help us understand the nature of Jesus' life and ministry. He tells us that he has come to seek and to save what was lost. This was not just for Zacchaeus 2000 years ago. The message is spoken anew today to us. Jesus continues to seek and to save what is lost in us in today.

It is important to note that Jesus not only saves but he seeks out. In the Gospel, Zacchaeus was merely hoping to be an observer. Up in the sycamore tree, he was a safe distance from the Lord. In his curiosity he could simply watch Jesus walk by and then go about his work (and sin) as a tax collector. But Jesus calls Zacchaeus down by name and invites himself over to the tax collector's home. Jesus actively pursued the opportunity to bring salvation and forgiveness to this sinner.

If we have ears to hear, Jesus says to us in our place of observation, "John ... Mary ... Joe ... Karen ... (add your name) ... come quickly. I want to stay at your house today." How will you respond? Will you invite Jesus in as Zacchaeus did? Will you allow the saving power and forgiveness of God to embrace you in Jesus? Remember, the Son of Man comes to seek and save what is lost in us.

This is the time of year when we celebrate the saving power and forgiveness of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time with our second graders in the School of Religion and St. Walter Catholic School. Even in their young age they are a microcosm of the larger church with regard to sin and forgiveness. Some are very nervous in approaching the sacrament, others come with great confidence in God's mercy; some have big smiles on their faces expressing joy in being forgiven; a few will express sorrow and guilt with tears; some come precociously proclaiming they are without sin; others are more focused on telling the sins of others before their own. In all of this, though, the love of God reigns supreme and the children experience the great love of God in his merciful forgiveness. Please pray for all of our children who are receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time. These same children will receive First Communion in the Spring.

I was deeply touched by the response to the call to Stewardship last week. To see parishioners, young and old, well-to-do and those making-ends-meet, able and otherwise, come to the altar at each Mass to "make their promises to the Lord in the presence of God's people" (Psalm 116) was very powerful. Stewardship is not just a one month campaign, it is an ongoing way of responding to God's call to discipleship. May whatever steps we are taking to respond, whether baby steps or bigger leaps of faith, bring us the true and lasting joy of the steward, who knows that by learning how to live with less, we appreciate all the more that which we choose to keep.

November has begun with a series of Masses for remembering the dead. Thursday's school Mass for All Saint's Day was a wonderful celebration in which the fourth graders, dressed as saints, reminded us all to honor the saints and follow their examples of holiness that we may someday join them in heaven.



Thank you to our parishioners that helped celebrate All Soul's Day on Friday night with the candle-light procession, the fire, and festivities that followed. It is good to remember, honor, and pray with and for our loved ones who have gone before us in faith.

This week at the Sunday Noon Mass we remember in a special way all of those who were buried from St. Walter Church during the past year. Our prayer at the time of death and at funerals is always two-fold. We pray for those who have died that they may receive the reward of heaven that comes to us through faith in Christ, and we pray for the loved ones who remain that they may know the consolation of their faith and the support of the Christian community and their friends. May these prayers be ours as we gather with those who celebrate the lives of their deceased loved ones this weekend.

Next weekend, November 10 and 11, we will celebrate the Anointing of the Sick at all weekend Masses. All who desire to experience the healing of Christ for physical, emotional, or spiritual reasons will be invited to come forward to receive the Sacrament through the laying on of hands and the anointing with the Oil of the Sick.

May our celebration of Mass today lead us to follow ...

After the Heart of Jesus!

Father John