

Homily: 31st Sunday: Cycle C: 2022: Wis 11: 22- 12: 2; Ps 145; 2 Thes 1: 11- 2:2; Lk 19: 1-10

“God loves each of us beyond our imagining - What is our response?”

1. **How the Lord loves us: both collectively, as a race of human beings made in His image, and individually as unique persons!** It has been said before by many of the saints: **if you or I were the only person on earth, Jesus would have come down to save us, from the power of satan, sin and death!** The God of the universe loves us that much!!! **Why?** Well, that is truly a mystery of the nature of pure love, which God is; a love that desires to give of itself and invite others to share in its joy! In comparison to the majesty of the Triune God, as we hear in the Book of Wisdom today, *“the whole universe is as a grain from a balance or a drop of the morning dew come down upon the earth.”* Really nothing at all, but God still loves all His creation, particularly the human race. God’s love and Providential care in light of that reality is truly amazing.
2. The **book of Wisdom** goes on to say, *“But you (the Lord) have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook people’s sins that they may repent.”* God does not overlook sins because He is weak, but rather because He wants all to freely come to embrace the fullness of His love and truth. He is patient because He wants all to be saved, as St. Peter says in his second letter in the New Testament (chapter 3: 8-10): *“This point must not be overlooked, dear friends. In the Lord’s eyes, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years are as a day. The Lord does not delay in keeping His promise - though some consider it “delay.” Rather, He shows you **generous patience**, since He wants none to perish but all to come to repentance. The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and on that day the heavens will vanish with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and all its deeds will be made manifest.”* Our response to this truth of God’s patience and mercy should be one of humility, awe, and immense gratitude: God is SO GOOD and I need to love Him better! It should also lead us to have more patience with ourselves and others in the long term project of growing in holiness. We need to respond to the Lord’s call to

salvation wholeheartedly, in a response of true love over time. **Remember all human beings were created for love: to give love and receive love in return.** But **this love must be God's version of love** - which is based on **truth** and **self-gift**; and not the **counterfeit versions of love** that *the world, the evil one, and our fallen nature* settles for - which in reality is **selfishness and lusts of various forms** wrapped up in the guise of what is called "love" by humans, but in reality is the farthest thing from the true divine love we are all called to share in freely.

3. That leads to the final point today which is: **how do we know if we are responding to the Lord's invitation of love with love in kind?** Well **the true test** is: **are undergoing ongoing repentance and spiritual conversion in our lives, in all honesty?** This is where the example of the tax collector **Zacchaeus** comes in. **Our good response to God's patience and mercy is seen in the fruit of our life: repentance from sin of various sorts and then concrete change which is manifested in a real purpose of amendment.** **This is what we promise to God every time we go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Do we realize that?** **Zacchaeus today responded to Jesus' call to love,** which was initiated by Jesus (*God always takes the initiative to draw us to His heart*) wanting to visit his home (*symbolic of the Lord visiting our heart and mind*), **by promising Christ that he is going to change his life** - in this case by giving away half his possessions and making restitution four fold for any extortion. **This is a radical response of true love.** Are we doing the same in our life? **Remember living the teachings of Christ and His Catholic Church is truly the path to spiritual freedom, and how we show love for God and neighbor.** **Sin never makes us truly happy, but only promises a false joy that ends in emptiness.** And what Jesus says today at the end of the Gospel passage should give us all **hope**, "*For the Son of Man has come to seek and save what was lost.*" **He wants to save us, despite our sins, however grave they are!** Will we allow Him to do so - *by seeking out His forgiveness and mercy regularly in the Sacrament of Confession, never receiving Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin, by the discipline of daily prayer and deeds of charity, and making the sacrifice to attend Mass on Sunday/Holy days always?* God bless you.