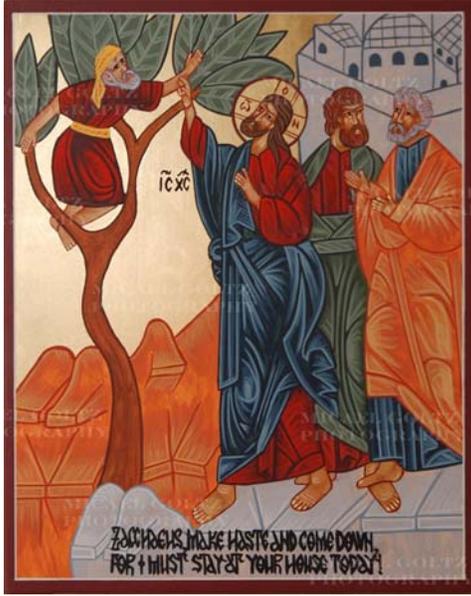


Dear Brothers and Sisters



‘The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost.’

Zacchaeus, which means ‘pure and righteous one’ did not live up to his name, in fact he was corrupt, and lost.

Zacchaeus was ‘short of stature.’

There were no anti-bullying laws to protect him, and he may have been ridiculed, made fun of, since childhood. Kids can be cruel. And so can adults.

Zacchaeus, instead of being righteous, was a self-righteous man. Head of customs in Jericho, where the lucrative production and export of balsam was centered, he became a bully.

In Scripture Jericho is an image of a worldly life, the antithesis of Jerusalem, the city of God. Unable to see Jesus, Zacchaeus climbs a sycamore tree, whose name, ‘Ficus sycomorus’ means the sycamore fig, or the fig mulberry. A huge tree, growing to 80 feet, with a trunk 20 feet wide, it offers Zacchaeus a clear line of sight, enabling him to rise above the crowd and see Jesus.

We also, like Zacchaeus, are surrounded by the crowd, bombarded by noise and commotion, internally and externally, which often times makes it difficult to hear or see Jesus, who is passing nearby.

Like Zacchaeus, each of us has a Sycamore in our life, that is, the place where we meet Christ. The sycamore fig is bitter to the taste, but when pierced its acidity is expelled, and the fruit becomes sweet. Zacchaeus’ heart is pierced when he meets Christ, the bile and venom within is extracted by his compunction of heart. He is literally ‘cut to the heart.’

The sycamore also represents the Cross, the wood of the tree on which Christ will be crucified. It is not we, but Christ who ascends this tree: “Zacchaeus come down.”

The things which have belittled and humiliated us, Christ allows to belittle and humiliate him. The injustices we have suffered have no more power over us, for Christ has suffered all injustice, and overcomes it in his Death and Resurrection.

Zacchaeus discovered that ‘today salvation has entered this house,’ may we be able to say the same when we meet Christ at Mass today.

Fr. Sean