



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

31st Sunday Year C

A work in progress

Readings: Wisdom 11: 22-12:2, Ps 144, 2 Thessalonians 1: 11-2:2, Luke 19: 1-10

There are moments, in the busiest of times, when life seems to pause, an outtake from time.

To stand under a cold night sky where the heavens are bejewelled with galaxies whose distant light set on its journey before the first man walked the earth. Or to walk the shoreline on some windswept empty strand where the elements, earth and air and ocean meet. To sit in an empty church where the people have left and catch in the last traces of drifting smoke, in the light through the clerestory window, a pattern of ascending dust as if we were observing the whirling immensity of the cosmos.

This is what the writer of the Book of the Wisdom invites us to do this morning. To know that even our whole planet is like a grain of dust or a drop of morning dew. The contemplation of the magnificence of creation and the scale of our part in it is a sobering reminder of how tiny, how temporary, how insignificant we truly are. Only when we have contemplated the truth of such humbling reality can we hear what the Holy Spirit of God now confirms in this Holy Scripture.

God, the Book of Wisdom tells us, loves all that exists, hates nothing He has made. Without God nothing would or could exist. His mercy on our sinfulness, our weakness is because He loves what He has made. God's mercy is patient. He gives us time to repent, time to turn the ship around. And, Wisdom tells us, this is a process. *'Little by little the Lord corrects the offender, reminding, instructing, encouraging us to turn from our demeaning and destructive sins and trust utterly in His mercy.'*

We are a work in progress, a work that will last for most of us well into the Purification that awaits us at the end of this mortal journey. There the refining fire of God's love will finally purge away what is not of Him and forge the gold that will present us in Christ before the Father's throne.

Today's Gospel has an eye to smallness too.

Zaccheus, the wealthy, the renegade, the collaborator, the man who has grown rich on the financial persecution of his fellow countrymen, is a small man. But he wants to see Jesus. He has heard of Him and probably heard of the way another tax gather, Matthew, has had his life turned around by Jesus. We cannot know what was whirling around the mind of this rich but alienated Hebrew. All we know is that he wanted to see Jesus.

It's a great lesson in not being surprised who turns up and never trying to guess their motives. He is there and the moment is not missed. He does not contemplate the cosmos, walk on the boundaries of the elements, consider his mortality and the shortness of his time. Instead the Lord of the Cosmos confronts Him. The One who has made all that is and seeks to redeem it out of love calls his name. The Lord of time and space reaches out to this little

creature stuck up a tree and then invites Himself into the selfsame sinner's home.

We are simply told that Zaccheus *'welcomed Him joyfully'*.

Zak's joy will shortly be joined by the rejoicing of Heaven because the Presence of the Lord leads to repentance. Zaccheus will try to put right what he has done wrong. Zaccheus is not going to be a saint overnight but the encounter with the love of God that has told him that his smallness, his sinfulness is not a barrier to God's love and God's love has truly changed him.

He now becomes, like us, a work in progress, but a work in progress that knows that this little agglomeration of the dust of dead stars is loved by the Lord and has an eternal future.

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