

Jesus invites himself to your house  
By Bishop Milan Lach, SJ

We prepare for every important event in our life psychologically, whether it is a vocation, such as marriage or priesthood, or even for the more mundane events, like a vacation.

Our Byzantine Catholic Church responds to this psychological need with Great Lent, a preparation for the summit of our faith: the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Even before Lent begins, the church offers five weeks with thematic Gospel readings that allow us to enter slowly into this intense ascetical process of Lent.

The first of these pre-Lenten Sundays is the Sunday of Zacchaeus. We hear the wonderful story of this rich man. He has the curiosity to meet a local religious celebrity.

This excited curiosity surely is alive today in the human heart. All one has to do is go to Rome and see how many people are excited to meet the pope!

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus as he entered Jericho, a city of big business. It was common for tax collectors to be around a big city, where they usually would stand at the border to collect tariffs.

We experienced something similar at the borders of Czechoslovakia during communism.

Yet Zacchaeus man had one challenge: He was very short. This did not stop him from exercising his desire to see Jesus; he just wanted to express his personality. Maybe it was simple curiosity. Maybe it was for a religious reason. Maybe his conscience got the better of him because of the money he had stolen.

We are Zacchaeus. We have our limits. We call these sins. Each of us has sins. Every one of us has sins, and we all need Jesus. So, I encourage you all to hurry down from your tree, because today Jesus must be in your house, just like in the Gospel. It's a wonderful thing.

Jesus invites himself to your house, that is, your heart. He wants to see the sacred rooms in your house. All of us are hiding something from God, but he wants to go there because he loves you.

The only condition is to have the desire to let him in. Jesus waits for our desire for him.

He respects our freedom. He will not break into the sacred rooms of your heart. God loves us and waits for us still. Can you imagine?

He wants to offer himself to you and to be with you and your house, not only on Sundays, but forever. Not only on this earth, but also after our death in the Father's house of eternal life. What is your desire? What is in your heart?

We all have challenges but we cannot remain in the tree as spectators. Jesus invites us to come down. We need to make this decision on this earth. Give him your answer.

+Bishop Milan

*This column was taken from a homily Bishop Lach delivered on Zacchaeus Sunday, Feb. 3, at St. Mary Magdalene Parish in Fairview Park, Ohio.*

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