

**St Ignatios of Antioch
Melkite Greek Catholic Church
1003 Merry Street
Augusta, Georgia 30904
706 364-6219**



**Sunday of Zacchaeus
January 22, 2023**



Sunday of Zacchaeus (January 22nd)

ONE OF THE SAYING OF THE LORD JESUS which puzzled His hearers and still puzzles people today is, *“How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God”* (Lk 18:24). It flies in the face of the “prosperity gospel” preached in many mega-churches as it did in Israel. Wealth is a blessing, it is said, and so the wealthy have been blessed by God. This must be a sign of God’s favor to them. The Lord’s words make no sense in the face of this ‘logic.’ When questioned how this could be, Jesus replied, *“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God”* (v.27).

A few verses later in Luke we read the story of Zacchaeus’ encounter with Christ in which a rich man enters the kingdom of God. This happens when Zacchaeus, a leading tax collector – and, therefore, a man in whose position greed and extortion would be a way of life – is so drawn to

the Lord Jesus that his riches cease to matter. He gives half his wealth to the poor and restored fourfold anything gained by fraud. Zacchaeus is therefore the opposite

of the rich young man in Luke 18 who chose keeping his wealth over following Jesus.

The Gospel story of Zacchaeus' conversion (Lk 19:1-10) offers some valuable insights into repentance. His spiritual journey begins with an encounter with Christ. At first Zacchaeus is moved by a kind of curiosity to climb the tree and see who this Jesus is. Then Christ calls him personally and they go off to Zacchaeus' house. True repentance always involves both our work and the Lord's. If He calls and we are not even curious, nothing will happen. If we seek Him in an inappropriate way – such as only coming to Him when we want something – He may remain silent.

Zacchaeus' repentance is not mere sentiment; it has concrete exterior manifestations. One is the desire to repair any wrongs he may have done to others. *“...if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore it fourfold”* (v. 8). We cannot move ahead unless we correct what we can of our past sins. When material things are at the heart of our sin it is relatively easy to make restitution. But how does anyone restore a broken relationship, heal a damaged childhood or re-establish another's reputation which we have smeared? The one we have harmed may demand something from us or our spiritual guide may offer alternative acts of reparation. But something concrete must be done.

Zacchaeus does not only look back, he also looks ahead. *“I give half of my goods to the poor...”* (v.8) Zacchaeus actually does something to fulfill the Lord's precept to love in a concrete way. This dynamic was explained most clearly by St Diadochos, the fifth-century Bishop of Photiki in northern Greece: “When a man begins to perceive the love of God in all its richness, he begins also to love his neighbor with spiritual perception. This is the love of which all the scriptures speak.” (*On Spiritual Knowledge and Discernment*, 15).

Zacchaeus' life-changing decision is clearly spelled out, but the dynamics of his encounter with Christ are not. What brought Zacchaeus to such a decision? What did he see in Jesus? We are not told because it is Zacchaeus' decision rather than how he experienced Christ which is of importance to us.

Later events in the life of the Church have shown that there are two principal ways to experience God. The first way is more dramatic, but less common. Here ***God reveals himself to a person directly***, as he did to St. Paul, or perhaps through reading the Scriptures or through an icon. When such an encounter takes place the person meeting the Lord reacts much as did Zacchaeus. He puts aside his “wealth” to follow Christ.

While a person's riches might be monetary like Zacchaeus, it may be other things as well. Paul – Saul as he was then – was not a wealthy man monetarily speaking but he had riches, which he described in Philippians 3:5-8. Paul's "wealth" was his status as "*a Hebrew of the Hebrews*," one whose credentials as a practitioner of Judaism were unmatched. He was an observant Pharisee, blameless in his observance of the Law. But after encountering Christ he says, "*What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ*" (v.7).

Throughout the centuries people have put aside their "wealth" for Christ. They gave up lands and possessions like St. Anthony the Great, but also high rank like St. Arsenius the Great, scholarly reputation like Evagrius, or political convictions like Dorothy Day. They chose to give up their "wealth" for something greater.

The second way of experiencing God in the Tradition is through ***asceticism***: ***struggling to change*** the focus of our life.

Most people today follow the lead of our secular culture in pursuing whatever gives us pleasure or material security while ignoring the continual presence of God on whom we all depend. Like teenagers focused on their iPhones or MP3 players, they are oblivious to the real world around them, in this case the presence of God.

When people embrace the ascetic life they work to refocus their lives away from the values of this age. They strive to break away from the compulsions or fixations that enslave so many, from a full-time pursuit of the attractions of the world.

They cease relying on their own minds to determine what is good for them and begin looking to God. In their innermost being they hear the Lord's words, "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*" (Mt 6:33). In this way they prepare themselves to recognize God "everywhere present and filling all things."

The Lord Jesus described the choice they and countless others have faced like this: "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it*" (Mt 13:44-46).

The "treasure hidden in a field" is the unique relationship with God in Christ which Zacchaeus, Paul and all the saints had found and which St Paul described as "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Col 1:27).

Each of us can attain this treasure because:

- While all creation reflects something of God, the Source of its being, we were created with something more of God in us: made *“in our image, after our likeness”* (Gen 1:26)
- The Word of God has become one of us in Jesus Christ, completely sharing our humanity so that we might share in His divine life: *“God became man so that man might become godlike”* (St Athanasius the Great)
- Christ has lived His human life in perfect communion with His Father: *“I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent me”* (Jn 8:16)
- Christ has promised to dwell in those who keep His word: *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him”* (Jn 14:23)
- When we maintain this communion with God by keeping His word we come to share by grace in His divine nature: *“His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him ...that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature”* (2 Pt 1:3-4).

What are you willing to put aside or to take up to attain this treasure?

In the Church calendar the story of Zacchaeus is read as the herald of the Triodion, the last Sunday before we open that guide to repentance and the Great Fast. As we recall the movements of Zacchaeus' repentance we should be led to ask ourselves about the quality of our love for God. To what concrete action are we being led to perform during the coming Fast? What tangible form will love take in our lives as we look to the celebration of Pascha? And what past offenses to others which have yet to be righted hang over us and taint our intentions for this season? Like Zacchaeus we are called to begin our spiritual exercise with the “warm-up” of repentance in deed as well as in thought.

“Zacchaeus, Come Down”

PHYSICAL FITNESS IS BIG BUSINESS today. People run to gyms and exercise programs, or they just run. St. Paul sees the value of keeping one's body in shape, but puts it in a perspective of his own. *“Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness*

is profitable for all things, having promise for the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1 Tim 4:8).

We may readily grasp that spiritual exercise may bear fruit in the life to come, but what promise does it have “for the life that now is”?

A great part of spiritual training is concerned with *the control of the passions*. We strive to free ourselves from the compulsion to pursue pleasure so that we can pursue a relationship with the living God. If we follow this training, the result in our life now is that we are no longer driven to acquire or possess. We are content.

When a person is beset by greed he is never satisfied with what he has. There is always more, there is always something better to be acquired. While he seems content with his latest acquisition it is only for a moment, because nothing he has truly satisfies. The same is true of people governed by gluttony, lust, popular acclaim or pride. They never have enough.

A person who has learned to control the passions, on the other hand, is content knowing that all he is and all he has is the gift of God. He has learned that material wealth, physical pleasure, or the good opinion of others are all passing and insignificant when compared with the possibility of knowing and serving God. He is happy to devote energy and resources to others as much as possible because he controls them; they do not control him. Controlling the passions makes us free here and now.

Someone who undertakes spiritual discipline devotes himself to developing spiritual strengths or virtues just as an athlete strengthens physical muscles. These strengths, or virtues, enable

spiritual athletes to remain faithful in the face of persecution or hardship. How could the martyrs and confessors have endured the torments they suffered without the fortitude spiritual discipline produces? How could people like Father Damien in a leper colony, Mother Teresa on the streets of Calcutta, or Dorothy Day in the tenements of New York have served day after day in such atrocious conditions without the patience and dedication of a spiritual athlete? Without the endurance which spiritual discipline produces believers would quickly fall away from their commitment and collapse on the sidelines. Spiritual discipline develops the endurance to live for God in the here and now.

Another aspect of spiritual discipline is concerned with *fidelity to prayer*. Many people pray – or say prayers – from a sense of duty. Praying, they feel, is something

we “ought to do.” A person of prayer is rather one who senses an authentic relationship with God and who prays out of love rather than a sense of obligation. Such a person reaps the fruits of a commitment to prayer in this life, becoming someone who experiences the presence of God in his life on earth.

The presence of God may be experienced in many ways. There are saints who have experienced God directly in visions or in charismatic gifts. But the presence of God may also be experienced in consolations or in the assurance of blessing from God without any exterior manifestation. In either case to experience the presence of God in one’s “life that now is” is clear evidence of the truth of St. Paul’s statement: godliness profits a person in this life as well as in the life to come.

Repentance: Warm-up to the Spiritual Life

We have all seen runners stretching their leg muscles before beginning a run. Their stretches are a warm-up in anticipation of the effort ahead. Similarly there is a warm up necessary at the start of a spiritual effort. Repentance is the necessary prerequisite to any effective spiritual effort, whether it is the encounter with Christ in the Liturgy or any of the mysteries, the Great Fast, or any spiritual work which we pray may be fruitful. Ignoring our personal spiritual state before undertaking any of these practices borders on presumption. Even world-class athletes, whether physical or spiritual, always begin each contest at the beginning, with a warm-up.

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On this day, the Sunday before the beginning of the Lenten Triodion, we commemorate the repentance of the tax-collector, the Holy Apostle Zacchaeus, who desired to behold Christ.

The Holy Fathers placed today's commemoration here to prepare us, little by little, for dawning season of the Great Fast. Knowing that we are basically slow to exhibit a desire for repentance, the Holy Fathers, by Zacchaeus' example, teach us in these preliminary weeks the need to recognize our sins and our need to turn away from them.

From the Synxarion

Sunday Collections

Attendance	Date	Collection
16	November 27, 2022	240.00
26	December 4, 2022	20.00
---	December 11, 2022	---
21	December 18, 2022	2,132.00
24	December 25, 2022	349.00
20	January 1, 2023	1,277.00
27	January 8, 2023	340.00
23	January 15, 2023	6,690.00

Divine Liturgy Intentions: For the Living:

Bishop Francois, Fr. Eugene Mitchell, Fr. James Graham, David Mangelsdorf, Brian Frank, Maria Barklage, Nookid Graham, Ali de la Vega, Jan Munn, A Special Parish Intention, Medical Personnel and First Responders

For the Dead:

Announcements

We are live-streaming on our Facebook page at the following days & times:

Friday 6:00 PM Weekday Vespers

Saturday - 6:00PM Great Vespers

Sunday – 9:00AM Orthros & 10:00AM Divine Liturgy

HOUSE BLESSINGS! With the Feast of Theophany and the blessing of Holy Water we now begin the season of blessing homes between now and the start of Great Lent. Let Father Michael when you'd like him to come and bless your house.

PRAYER OPPORTUNITES AROUND TOWN –Most Holy Trinity parish will be hosting a Men's Holy Hour every Friday morning from 6-7am. There will also be a coffee hour and reflection time afterwards – Men from all parishes are invited to attend for whatever portion of the time they are available. For the Ladies – St. Joseph's will be hosting a Women's Holy Hour on the first Monday of each month at 7pm.

A Dating Retreat and Study Series for single Catholics! NCSC is hosting a **FREE online Dating Retreat with guest speaker Fr. Robert Spitzer (January 27 & 28)**. Over 400 single Catholics from around the world have already signed up and we're expecting 500+. Don't miss the opportunity to meet other like-minded singles and go deeper in your faith!

Starting the week of February 6th, NCSC will also be hosting a **6-week study series - "Relationship Ready: A Single Catholic's Roadmap to Marriage"** that will cover topics such as the **meaning of love, communication, conflict resolution, male/female complementarity** and much more. To sign up for these programs, visit NationalCatholicSingles.com.

Connect with like-minded single Catholics

<p>At the</p> <p><i>the Dating Retreat</i></p> <p>Find what you're looking for</p> <p>January 27 & 28</p>	<p>Join us for</p> <p><i>Relationship Ready:</i></p> <p>The Single Catholic's Roadmap to Marriage</p> <p>Starting the week of February 6th</p>
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NationalCatholicSingles.com



Resurrectional Troparion

(Tone 3)



You de-scen-ded from on high, O Com-pas - sion - ate



One; and con-sen - ted to bu - ri - al for three days



that You might free us from suf - fer - ing.



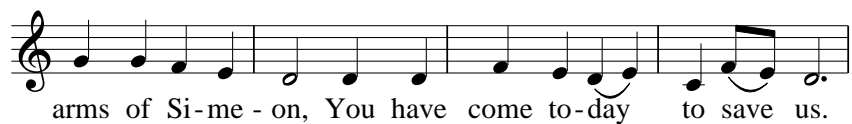
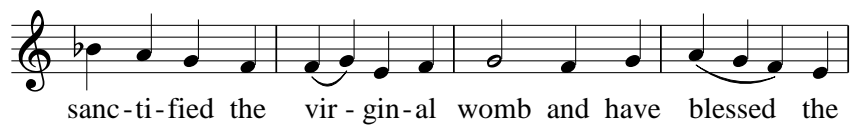
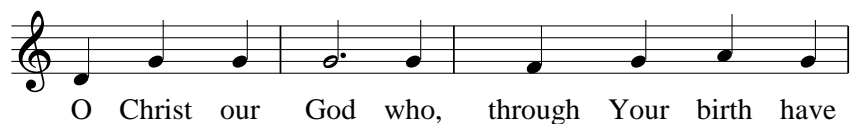
O Lord, our life and our re-sur - rec-tion, glo - ry



to You.

Kondakion of Hypapanty

(Tone 1)



Prokimenon

Reader: The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

All: The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

Reader: Give to the Lord, you sons of God, give to the Lord glory and praise.

All: The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

Reader: The Lord will give strength to His people;

All: The Lord will bless his people with peace.

Readings for the Week:

Monday:	1 st Peter 2:21-3:9	Mark 12:13-17
Tuesday:	1 st Peter 3:10-22	Mark 12:18-27
Wednesday:	1 st Peter 4:1-11	Mark 12:28-37
Thursday:	1 st Peter 4:12-5:5	Mark 12:38-44
Friday:	2 nd Peter 1:1-10	Mark 13:1-8
Saturday:	2 nd Peter 2:11-19	Luke 18:2-8

Jan. 22: Holy Apostle Timothy; Holy Martyr Anastasios the Persian
Jan. 23: Holy Hieromartyr Clement, Bishop of Ancyra; Holy Martyr Agathangel
Jan. 24: Venerable Mother Xenia the Roman
Jan. 25: Gregory the Theologian, Patriarch of Constantinople
Jan. 26: Holy Father Xenophon and his family
Jan. 27: Transfer of the Remains of St. John Chrysostom
Jan. 28: Holy Father Ephrem the Syrian; Isaac the Syrian, Bishop of Nineveh
Jan. 29: Transfer of the Remains of the Holy Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-Bearer

Word Search

L	L	U	H	T	S	Z	W	C	Q	H	U	X	Y	Z	D	G
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Abraham
Climbed
Crowd
Fourfold
Haste
House
Jericho

Lost
Murmur
Poor
Possessions
Publican
Rich
Salvation

Sinner
Small
Stature
Sycamore
Tree
Welcomed
Zacchaeus

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Rt. Rev. Michael Skrocki, JCD
Pastor

abounamike@aol.com

Knights of Columbus **JFK Council**

1st Wednesday of the month, 7pm.

Odd-numbered months at St. Ignatios

Even-numbered months here at Most Holy Trinity

4th Degree Assembly

2nd Wednesday of the month, 7pm

Odd-numbered months at Most Holy Trinity

Even-numbered months here at St. Ignatios

Publicans Prayer Group

Postponed until Further Notice

New Parishioners:

Please register with Fr. Michael.

Mystery of Holy Confession

Please contact Fr. Michael to set up a convenient time.

Mystery of Christian Initiation

Expectant parents should notify Fr. Michael prior to the birth of the child. Adult converts should contact Fr. Michael so arrangements may be made for any necessary instruction and sacraments.

Mystery of Holy Crowning

Those planning to marry should notify the Fr. Michael
at least six months prior to the desired Wedding date.

Mystery of Holy Anointing

Please notify Fr. Michael when you or a family member is in need of anointing.

To report sexual abuse by clergy, parish personnel or volunteers of the Eparchy of Newton,
please call the Victim Assistance Coordinator at 1-800-479-5910.

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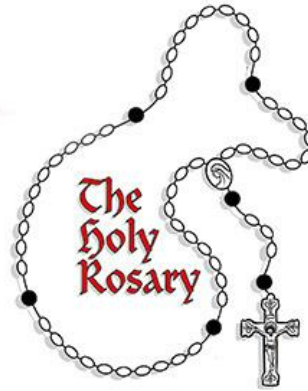
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