



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
September 26, 2021

Protect Life

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The tapestry by Pieter van Aelst in the Vatican Museum, *Slaughter of the Innocents*, may not seem to have much to do with today’s readings, yet it does. Let me explain: This wall-size work of art depicts the murder decreed by Herod of all the children two years and under. It was his desperate effort to extinguish any possibility that the Messiah might eventually contest his throne.

The reading of James could very well be applied to the greedy and avaricious Herod. “You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you have fattened

your hearts for the day of [your own] slaughter” (James 5:5). All the wealth, authority, and success he had only led him to be more grasping and insecure. Anyone who sees a threat to his own well-being in the birth of a child reveals his own internal poverty of spirit.

Rather than remove the little ones from our lives, we should do all we can to edify and maintain their faith. Jesus, as well as James, has harsh words for anyone who would lead a little one to sin.

Herod was the first who needed to hear the words of the Messiah he was trying to silence. If anything causes you to sin, even something as precious as a hand or foot, it’s better to cut it off and live physically impaired rather than maintain apparent wholeness while spiritually rotting from within. The life of our souls and that of the little ones is of paramount importance, and no material security should be placed ahead of it. +

Anyone who sees a threat to his own well-being in the birth of a child reveals his own poverty of spirit.

Sunday Readings

Numbers 11:25–29

[Moses said,] “If only all the people of the LORD were prophets! If only the LORD would bestow his spirit on them!”

James 5:1–6

Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries.

Mark 9:38–43, 45, 47–48

[Jesus said,] “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna.”

A Word from Pope Francis

It is our great responsibility, as baptized persons, to proclaim Christ, to carry the Church—this fruitful motherhood of the Church—forward. Mary, during the persecution of the first Christians, prayed so much and moved those who had been baptized to go forward with courage.

—Homily, April 17, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I protect life as a gift from the Father, from conception to natural death?
- How do I help the little ones in my life come to know Jesus?

Climbing Zacchaeus' Tree

By Fr. Bruce Lewandowski, CSsR

The story of Zacchaeus is a favorite for many (Luke 19:1–10). It's appealing because of Zacchaeus' desire to see Jesus, his shortness of stature, his sinful reputation, and his spontaneous tree-climbing. And it's unforgettable because of Jesus' gift of mercy. Everyone can identify with all or part of this story.

For me, it's all about the tree. The tree is right smack in the middle of the story. It creates the dividing line for the before-and-after pictures of Zacchaeus. Before the tree, it's Zacchaeus the sinner. After the tree, Zacchaeus is redeemed. The tree is the vehicle, the instrument, the tool that makes the after shot possible. The tree allows Zacchaeus to reach a pivotal point, bringing about a life-changing encounter. After that meeting, Zacchaeus would never be the same.

Look at the trees in your life! Trees offer a meeting place, a spot for encountering the living God and the possibility of experiencing life-changing grace. Look at trees as if all were the tree in the story of Zacchaeus!

Stop and find the beauty in trees. Individually or a forest full of them, they are inspiring. Fall leaves or sprouting spring leaves remind us that nature can draw us closer to God, revealing the wonder of it all.

The Family Tree: Sometimes the closeness and familiarity of family can keep us from seeing God living and active in those nearest and dearest to



us. We can encounter the living God through our mother, father, sister, brother, or husband or wife. A young mom with her newborn baby in her arms told me that she and her husband were humbled that God would choose them to help create a new person.

The Money Tree: My mother always says that money doesn't grow on trees. It's the fruit of hard work. Most of us know work as a burden, part of the curse brought on us by Adam and Eve's original sin. But isn't work the continuing of God's good creation? A carpenter takes wood and makes beautiful furniture. A chef mixes simple ingredients to make something delicious. We are charged with perfecting

what God has given us, mixing together unheard-of combinations of things, raising them to new and spectacular levels.

The Tree of Life: The cross is the tree of life. It is the surest sign of God's love for us. The cross of Christ on Calvary undoes the original sinful act in the Garden of Eden. Saint Alphonsus urges us to gaze at the cross, and there we will find every reason to love God. "By his wounds we were healed!" (Isaiah 53:5).

Look at the trees! Nature, family, work, and faith—similar to trees—all invite us to a life-changing experience of grace. Climb one! You will never be the same. +

*Flowers and plants,
seas and rivers, sun
and moon all proclaim
God's goodness.*

PRAYER

*Lord, I am grateful for your
all-embracing love. Open my
eyes to see you in everyone
I meet. Open my heart to
welcome all your people.*

—From *Grateful Meditations for Every Day
in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 27–
October 2

Monday, St. Vincent de Paul:
Zec 8:1–8 / Lk 9:46–50

Tuesday, Weekday:
Zec 8:20–23 / Lk 9:51–56

Wednesday, Sts. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael:
Dn 7:9–10, 13–14 or Rv 12:7–12a / Jn 1:47–51

Thursday, St. Jerome:
Neh 8:1–4a, 5–6, 7b–12 / Lk 10:1–12

Friday, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus:
Bar 1:15–22 / Lk 10:13–16

Saturday, The Holy Guardian Angels:
Bar 4:5–12, 27–29 / Mt 18:1–5, 10

Bringing Home
the **Word**

September 26, 2021

© 2021 Liguori Publications, a ministry of the Redemptorists. One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. Scripture quotations in this publication are from the *New American Bible*, revised edition, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. The Pope Francis quotation is used with permission and copyright © 2020 *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. All rights reserved. 1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.