

## Thirty-first Sunday of the Year

### The story of Zacchaeus

#### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been in a crowd where you could not see? Perhaps someone lifted you onto their shoulders to get a better view! In today's Gospel we hear how one man climbed a tree to see Jesus clearly.

#### SIGN OF THE CROSS

#### LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and say aloud:  
'Your words, Lord, are a light in the darkness.  
Help us to listen carefully.'

#### SORRY

Ask one of the children to choose a sorry colour and together read the corresponding prayer aloud.

#### GLORIA

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Jesus came to change our hearts.  
Alleluia!

#### GOSPEL (cf Luke 19:1-10)

Jesus went to a town called Jericho, where a man called Zacchaeus lived. Nobody liked Zacchaeus because he was a tax collector who cheated people to make himself rich. When Jesus arrived, crowds gathered to see him and Zacchaeus was among them. Zacchaeus was very small and could not see Jesus because of the crowds, so he climbed a tree to get a better view. As Jesus passed by, he looked up and said, 'Come down Zacchaeus! I want to visit your house today.'

Zacchaeus almost fell out of the tree with surprise. Hearing this, the crowd began to grumble and complain. 'How can Jesus speak to such a wicked man!' they said.

Then Zacchaeus turned to Jesus and said, 'Lord, I know that I am a dishonest cheat, but I want to change and put things right! I will give half of everything I own to the poor, and pay back everything I have stolen four times over.' Jesus smiled at Zacchaeus and said, 'I have come to find and save anyone who has lost their way. Now change your heart and make a fresh start.'

#### DISCUSSION

Why did the people think that Zacchaeus was wicked? – Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector in Jericho. (Recall last week's discussion about how

the tax collectors grew rich by charging extra taxes and cheating the people out of their money.)

Why did Zacchaeus end up sitting in a tree? – Zacchaeus was a very short man, and could not see Jesus because of the crowds around him. Zacchaeus climbed the tree to get a good view.

What did Jesus do as he walked by? – Jesus called Zacchaeus to come down and take him to his home.

The crowds, and Zacchaeus himself, were shocked when Jesus did this. Why were they so surprised? – The crowds did not think that Jesus should have anything to do with such a dishonest man. None of them liked Zacchaeus, and he had no friends until Jesus offered his friendship. Jesus was willing to forgive and forget what Zacchaeus had done, and to give him the chance to make a fresh start.

Jesus came to call all sinners back to God's love and away from selfishness and greed. What did Zacchaeus promise to do to show that he had truly had a change of heart? – He promised to be generous and to give back everything he owed and more. Jesus loved Zacchaeus despite his faults, and because of this love Zacchaeus turned back to God. We all make mistakes and Jesus calls each one of us to turn back to his love, and change our hearts. He is full of forgiveness, and will fill us with his love and goodness to help us make a fresh start.

#### ACTIVITY

Cut out a tree shape with branches and the figure of Zacchaeus. After colouring, place Zacchaeus 'in' the tree and attach it to a sheet of paper. The children can glue on leaves made from tissue paper or real leaves if preferred. Add the caption, 'Zacchaeus finds a friend!'

#### CREED

#### CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus,  
make our hearts more loving  
and ready to forgive others  
just as you forgive us.