

Children's liturgy – Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

Preparation of the worship space

Colour: Green

Props: Coloured pens and pencils, large cardboard tree and card for making lots of leaves and the face of Zacchaeus.

Song suggestions: Seek ye first the kingdom of God (633, *Celebration Hymnal for Everyone*)

Welcome: Today Jesus stays at the house of Zacchaeus - a tax collector, and shows us that everyone is loved.

Opening prayer: Saving God, you welcome everyone into your kingdom. Help us to welcome everyone we meet into the kingdom of our hearts. Amen.

First reading (optional): Wisdom 11:22-12:2

Psalms: Psalm 144:1-2, 8-11, 13-14. R. Cf. v.1

Gospel acclamation: everyone stands and sings the acclamation together. Suggestions include: 'Halle, halle, halle' (Caribbean) from 'Sing With the World', Alison Adam & John Bell; 'Alleluia' (Zimbabwe), Abraham Maraire Publications, WCC & GIA; 'Celtic Alleluia' (traditional); 'Alleluia! Raise the Gospel' from 'Go Before Us', Bernadette Farrell, OCP Publications.

Gospel: Luke 19: 1-10

Gospel reflection: What do you remember from today's reading?

Jesus tells us that while he was in Jericho, a man called Zacchaeus who was very rich from being a tax collector wanted to meet him, but Zacchaeus was so short that he had to climb a tree in order to catch a glimpse of Jesus.

Can you remember what Jesus said to Zacchaeus? How did Zacchaeus reply? Why did the crowds get cross?

Why do you think Zacchaeus was so determined to see Jesus that he gathered his clothes around his legs and climbed up a tree?

Something inside Zacchaeus hoped that seeing Jesus would make a difference in his life. How do you think Jesus could make a difference to Zacchaeus' life?

Maybe Zacchaeus really wanted to change his life, but didn't know how to do it without someone helping him. Jesus was the only one who knew how to help.

If Zacchaeus was so rich why did this not make him happy? What does this tell us about money and possessions today?

Zacchaeus promises to give away half of his possessions to the poor and pay back the money he has taken unfairly from other people. He is making his relationships right again and treating people fairly.

Why was Jesus asking Zacchaeus to get down from the tree so quickly and why did he want to stay at his house?

Jesus looked at this man who was looking for him. Jesus had a way of seeing straight into the heart. Jesus could see that Zacchaeus wanted to change.

Zacchaeus changed his life because of Jesus and now Zacchaeus wants to have better relationships with everyone he knows and with God. When we let Jesus into our lives our relationships with each other are much better. Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus into his home and into his heart.

God is always ready to make a home with us. Do you make room for God in your heart and in your home?

What change will you make to your life and the lives of others by welcoming God into your home and into your heart this week?

Intercessions *You may want to ask the children to offer their own prayers or you can use the suggestions below.*

Jesus is ready to help us change today and always so we pray together...

We pray for the Church: that it may be a place where everyone is welcome and inspire a change in the lives of all those who hear its message. Lord in your mercy...

We pray for our brothers and sisters in every country: that they may have their fair share of the good things God has given for all. Lord in your mercy...

We pray for our parish, family and friends: that we may support each other in love and prayer, and make changes so that all people may live together in peace. Lord in your mercy...

Closing prayer Welcoming Lord, come and stay with us. Fill our homes with your presence and fill our hearts with your love. Help us to show kindness and mercy to everyone we meet. Amen

Activity suggestions

Ask the children to colour in the accompanying illustration and to write words on the leaves of the tree that explain how Zacchaeus made his relationship with Jesus and with others right again. E.g. love, forgiveness, mercy, justice, peace, kindness, prayer, happy, blessed, grace etc.

Ask the children to make a large cardboard tree and to stick lots of leaves on it with the words above on. Make a cardboard face of Zacchaeus. Leave room on the tree to put Zacchaeus' face on among the leaves. You can first hide him when he hasn't seen Jesus and then make him appear when he has spoken to Jesus. You can play a game of hide and seek if you have time.

Ask the children to go home and share all that they have heard and thought about today. Ask them to make a change to their lives to welcome Jesus in and to try to make their relationships with other people better.