

# Read

Wisdom 11:22–12:2

Psalm 145:1–2, 8–9,  
10–11, 13, 14

2 Thessalonians 1:11–2:2

Luke 19:1–10

# Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 30, 2022



## REFLECTION

Tax collecting was a profitable profession in Jesus' day, but not an honorable one. Not only did tax collectors like Zacchaeus work for the Roman occupiers, many of them also charged much more than was owed and became wealthy as a result. It's no wonder the crowd was shocked when Jesus insisted on going home with Zacchaeus! They must have wondered what it meant. Didn't Jesus know how many people Zacchaeus had victimized to become wealthy? Didn't he care about injustice?

Jesus' actions remind us that God's justice is much deeper than our own. We settle for punishment, but Jesus desires penitence. Zacchaeus' sins deserved retribution; Jesus brought restoration.

This should bring us comfort! If you draw close to Christ, he will not condemn you. No matter how far you or I fall, Jesus holds out to us the promise of wholeness and the path of reconciliation.



## ACTION

Curiosity was the starting point that led Zacchaeus to faith and personal change. Zacchaeus left his home that day and climbed a tree because he was curious, and Jesus saw him and invited him into a deeper friendship that changed his life. What questions do you have about Jesus and the Church? Your pastor, catechists, parents, and Catholic books or digital resources can be the "tree" that helps you see Jesus more clearly. This week, ask some questions and let your curiosity draw you into a closer encounter with Christ.



**Check out the Word  
on Fire YouTube channel**  
(<https://www.youtube.com/user/wordonfirevideo>) or tweet your questions about the Church to #AskBishopBarron.

## ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Why does Luke make a point of telling us that Jesus wasn't originally planning on stopping in Jericho (Luke 19:1)?
- ❖ How can you live out a commitment to restorative justice in your home, school, and community?



October 30, 2022

# THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## LECTIONARY #153C

Wisdom 11:22–12:2

Psalm 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13, 14

2 Thessalonians 1:11–2:2

Luke 19:1-10

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

The tax collector Zacchaeus plays a prominent role in today's Gospel. He is not just a regular tax collector, but a chief tax collector. He has made a fortune on the misery of others. Whatever Zacchaeus had done in his past, he now desires salvation. As a short man, he climbs a tree to see Jesus. Jesus sees him and calls to him, choosing to dine with this man. Sharing a table is akin to a friendship or bond. Jesus does not mind sharing the table with Zacchaeus, because though he had done wrong in his life, he had a heart open to God. Zacchaeus repented of his sins and was welcomed back to God. This is the invitation for us all.

**Q FOCUS:** *Jesus comes to find us, call us, and welcome us back to him.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week the church will celebrate the solemnity of All Saints (November 1), a holyday of obligation. It is followed by the commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day). The month of November is a wonderful time to remember those who have passed away, the named saints of the Church and the beloved dead of our families. Cultural celebrations throughout the Catholic world celebrate these days in special ways. Share any particular cultural practices that are part of your parish community or group. It is important to appreciate the different

cultural expressions of the Catholic faith because it reminds us that our faith is truly a universal church.

### Church Teaching Connection

"Brothers and sisters, let Jesus also call us by name! In the depths of our hearts, let us listen to his voice which says: 'Today I must stop at your house'; that is, in your heart, in your life. And let us welcome him with joy. He can change us, he can transform our stony hearts into hearts of flesh, he can free us from selfishness and make our lives a gift of love. Jesus can do this; let Jesus turn his gaze to you!" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, November 3, 2013).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel

Luke 19:1-10

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

At that time, Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came

down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

► If the pope were to visit the United States, which person would most surprise you to see with him at dinner?

► If the pope were visiting this faith community, whose house would you be surprised to see him at?

Jesus, in today's Gospel, does a surprising thing. He stays at the head tax collector's home, a man named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a famously short man. He was short in stature and short in reputation. He built his wealth on the suffering of others. He worked with the hated Romans. He was thought of as a sinner.

But Jesus saw him for who he really was, a child of God. Even in a crowd full of people, Jesus saw Zacchaeus. And it wasn't so hard to notice him . . . Zacchaeus was, oddly, in a tree. Can you imagine the sight? Imagine the world's richest man, up in a tree, trying catch a glimpse of a renowned celebrity? It sounds a little ludicrous.

Though the tax collector was despised, in his heart, he was searching for God. He had a heart that was open. That's why he climbed the tree. Maybe he thought he wasn't worthy to be close to Jesus. Maybe he thought that people would shut him out. Maybe

he didn't even know why he climbed, but there he was in the tree, desiring to see Jesus.

► Have you ever done something that might have seemed out of character for you, in order to live out your faith?

As Jesus approached, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name, telling him that he would stay in his home. Jesus sees us and calls each one of us by name. He knows who we are and the choices we've made. Because he knows us, all of our good and our bad, he loves us and desires to come to our home to stay.

► If Jesus came to your home, would you be proud of what he would find there?

► What would you need to prepare for Jesus to enter your home?

The truth is Jesus is ready to make a home in our hearts today. But that may make us uncomfortable. We may feel the need to clean up some things. That is a natural feeling. When we draw close to Jesus, when get close to the holiness of Christ, we have a desire to be holy ourselves. Zacchaeus, on sharing a meal with Jesus, desires to make things right, give his riches to the poor and restore anything he took, with interest. He offers his true repentance. He is willing to change.

► How can you offer your repentance to God? How can the sacraments and Mass help with that?

God is waiting for you. When you do allow Jesus into your home, into your life, and your heart, he transforms it. He brings you peace, comfort, and healing. In a word, he brings salvation.

So we are all encouraged to climb up from our sin to see Jesus. Climb like Zacchaeus, take an active step in faith. The tree of forgiveness is before you, but you must be the one to climb it. He is calling you. Climb up.

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 50.*

**Jesus knows each of us by name and calls us, just like he did for Zacchaeus.**

There is a natural desire, when welcoming Jesus, to clean our mess. This is our conscience speaking.

Jesus invites us to climb the tree of forgiveness. This is an act of faith that brings wholeness and peace.

## Act on the Word

### Examination of Conscience

For this activity, you will need an examination of conscience (you can find one that fits your group here: <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/penance/examinations-of-conscience>), candles for each participation, and one main candle. Candles can be replaced with electric tea lights/candles if you are not allowed to have open flames.

This activity is a visual examination of conscience. If possible, it is best to coordinate this activity with the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation. Invite your pastor to join your group for the evening and be available to offer the sacrament to any of the young people who wish to go.

All participants are given one candle. Arrange the young people in chairs that form a large circle, with individuals spaced out from one another. Begin in a darkened room with a single candle in the front of the space. Take the one candle and light the candles nearest the front. Allow the participants to share their light until all candles are lit. Alternatively, participants can turn on their candles from the front of the room to the back.

Allow a moment to look around and see the lit candles and remark on the power of a single candle and the light it emits.

Instruct the young people to turn their chairs around so that everyone is facing outward in the circle (they are no longer facing one another). This is an important way to give the young people some privacy during this prayerful activity. Invite the participants to reflect on an examination of conscience. You will read the examination out loud. You can use any examination of conscience that you think is suitable for your group. Many are readily available

online (for example, see the list of activity materials above for a link to the USCCB's website).

Before you begin to read the examination aloud, encourage the participants to blow out their candle when they hear something in the examination that tugs at their conscience or that they have committed.

Read the entire examination of conscience, even if all of the candles have already been blown out. Allow silence to fill the space and hearts. At the end, remind the participants that like Zacchaeus, we too must climb the tree of forgiveness. It is there that Jesus calls our name and comes to our home and hearts. He desires to share his life with us. Repenting our sins makes space for Jesus. Invite them to receive Jesus' forgiveness with joy, for today salvation has come to these hearts.

If there is the ability to go to reconciliation, now would be the time. You can play prayerful music and offer journaling or reflection time while the young people wait their turn.

If there is no reconciliation, end the activity by praying the Act of Contrition. As the prayer is being said, have the participants relight their candles from the main light in the front of the space.

### Closing Prayer

*God, our loving Father,  
you bring us to newness of life.  
Guide along the paths of holiness  
your people searching for meaning,  
so that they may come to rejoice  
in their ever deeper relationship  
with our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity  
of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.*

### For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.