

31C SML 2019 Called by Name
LK 19:1-10

In this evening's/morning's gospel, Zacchaeus is desperately anxious to see Our Blessed Lord. This longing on the part of the tax collector, despite his dishonest occupation which challenged his relationship with both God and man, was because Zacchaeus had preserved at the bottom of his heart, a feeling for truth. For this reason, the human measure of things is capable of meeting with the divine measure of things. And in this passionate wish of his to see Our Blessed Lord face to face, Zacchaeus comes up against two difficulties: he is a small man and for this reason, he must find a way of catching the eye of the Lord, and this way will make him the object of derision.

But are we not all small men, eclipsed by the crowd of society and prevented from seeing? And when this happens, we have to raise our selves to new heights which are not ours, going above ourselves by God's grace while still remaining as small and as poor as we were at the start.

One particular drawback, as in the case of Zacchaeus, is the negativity of the crowd, for they grumbled. Derision is generally what stops us more emphatically than anything else

in our quest for God. What will others think? What will they say? Suppose I fail?

I will never forget the day I told my mother I wanted to be a priest. Until the day she died she always said she was never so shocked as she was when I told her I wanted to be a priest. Her response is something I could never repeat from the pulpit. Later that same day, she said, “Dan, if I were you, I wouldn’t say anything to anyone about this. Suppose you change your mind, or suppose you don’t get accepted to the seminary yada yada yada. The fear of grumbling, as did the crowds to Zacchaeus.

So I didn’t say a word. About a week went by and she said, “Dan remember we decided you wouldn’t tell anyone . . .” I said, “Mom, I haven’t told a soul.” “Well, I have.” “Who’d you tell?” I told Terry Dwyer, who was her best girlfriend. And said, “O great, and who’s Terry going to tell?” “Terry will tell her husband, and neither will say a word.”

This weekend and next weekend, every parish in the Diocese of Trenton is participating in the “Called by Name” Program. This is not to be confused with our annual custom here at SML to wear nametags in November so we can call each other by name. The “Called by Name” of which all priests

and I are preaching on these weekends, is to for you to recommend a young man here at St. Mary of the Lakes, by name, to consider the priesthood.

Here's how it works. In the pews are cards. Take a card, and think of a young man you see at Mass or around the parish between the ages of 16-40 who you think would have what it takes to be a priest. Write his name down, his address if you know it, his phone, his age and how well you know him. Drop the card in the collection basket and the priests on the vocation team will take it from there. The cards will also be available in the pews next weekend.

This program has been implemented in more than a few dioceses in the country and it has been very successful. A mini "Called by Name" was test piloted in Mercer County earlier this year. Pastors, youth ministers and directors of religious education programs were asked to recommend young men in their parish who are high school and college students. A list of 90 young men was submitted to the vocation director. He in turn invited these 90 to a vocations evening, which included Mass and dinner with the bishop and about 8 priests. Thirty accepted the invitation, and of the 30, 20 indicated at the end

of the evening they were interested in discerning a vocation to the priesthood. So it works!

Also, we need you to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers, priests into his harvest. We have a Pray for Vocations Program that's been up and running for a few years now. And we have some faithful prayer warriors or sign up every month. Our Lord would love for more families to ask Him to bless our diocese with more priestly vocations. And pray for the success of Called by Name.

When I was in college, I began to think about the priesthood. And this came out of the blue as I was dating a nice Italian Catholic girl from Rutgers. At times I thought my Mom and Dad loved her more than they loved me. Only one person, my Godfather's wife, asked me, "Dan, have you ever thought of being a priest?" And I had been but I didn't tell anyone. And her question was the impetus to move on the vocation and speak to my pastor at St. Joan of Arc, Father Pedata. And I am so grateful I did, as I cannot think of any other path for me where I would feel so blest and so connected to the Lord. And isn't that what this life is all about.

So thanks for your attention this morning, fill out the cards, and join me praying for vocations!