

Nothing to Prove

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Much of our lives are spent trying to prove ourselves. We do this mostly with other people, but also with God and with ourselves. We want to show that we are right, intelligent, moral, important, or superior. If only we could prove ourselves to somebody, we would be happy and complete people. In turn, we often expect others to prove themselves to us, as if we are the ones to determine someone's worth.

Truthfully, this isn't what life is about and God really isn't impressed with the many ways we try to prove ourselves. God is more impressed with the fact that we exist. While we're busy trying to prove ourselves, God is patiently waiting for us to stop. As we heard in the first reading from the *Book of Wisdom*, God loves everything simply for just existing: "for you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned. And how could a thing remain unless you will it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you." We were created, came forth, and have been willed by God...what else is there for us to prove? God's affirmation of us comes not from what we do, but that we are.

In our Gospel today from *Luke*, Jesus affirms Zacchaeus' existence for who he was, even though he clearly wasn't living according the Gospel values. He was wealthy, a chief tax collector, had many possessions, and a sinner. Yet, when Jesus saw him in the sycamore tree, Jesus reached out to him and said, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." Even though Zaccheaus was considered a lost soul by

others, Jesus acknowledged that “this man too is a descendant of Abraham.” This man, too, has value from God.

One of the places where we do not have to worry about trying to prove ourselves is in our own homes. Maybe it was no accident that Jesus wanted to spend time with Zacchaeus in his home. As we heard, even though Jesus intended to pass through Jericho, he changed his mind and decided to stay the evening. The home was the place where Zacchaeus could safely drop all the images he had of himself and simply be. God wants to do the same for each one of us. God wants us to come home to the place where we can drop the need to prove ourselves and simply be.

The spiritual author Henri Nouwen, speaking about being home, wrote this reflection to his readers: “Stop wandering around. Instead, come home and trust that God will bring you what you need. Your whole life you have been running about, seeking the love you desire. Now is the time to end that search. Trust that God will give you that all-fulfilling love and will give it in a human way. Before you die, God will offer you the deepest satisfaction you can desire. Just stop running and start trusting and receiving.” (*Inner Voice of Love*, 12)

God calls us to a place where we have nothing to prove, but simply appreciate that we are created by God.

Am I still going out of my way to prove myself to others? God? Myself?

As we continue with this mass, let us pray that we may not endlessly wander through life trying to be someone weren't not. As children of God, there is nothing left for us to prove. Let us be home with God so that Jesus may say to us, “today, salvation has come to this house.”