

## Jesus Meets Zacchaeus: A Call to Renewal continued from front cover

When someone has found a good restaurant, or has seen an inspiring film, or has discovered an awesome vacation spot, they are quite eager to share that experience with others. Can Christians do anything less with respect to their life of faith? Should they not be more enthusiastic in sharing the love and forgiveness, the joy and peace, the grace and salvation that they have found in Christ and in the life of His holy Church?

Let us then take up the theme of renewal in earnest – our own personal renewal and the renewal of our local parish, the indispensable foundation of sacrament, education, and fellowship. Let us kneel in faith and prayer before the icon of Christ. Let us embrace Him with tears of repentance and joy in order that we may be changed and transformed from within, and be shining witnesses of His presence, His grace, and His love to one another.

May the day quickly come when the Risen Lord will say to us in our hearts what He said to the family of Zacchaeus: “Today salvation has come to this house!” Amen.

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*If you wish to contribute a reflection to the next issue of Priest to Priest, please email [rloumiotis@iocc.org](mailto:rloumiotis@iocc.org)*



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# PRIEST *to* PRIEST

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*A Reflection by Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos*

Zacchaeus was the man who climbed a tree to catch a good look at Jesus. Being short and unable to see through the crowd, Zacchaeus scaled a tree to gain a full view of Jesus (Luke 19:1–10). Zacchaeus was not a popular man. As a chief tax collector, he worked for the Roman authorities which oppressed and exploited the people. Zacchaeus was despised as a traitor and a sinner.

Jesus, however, was not constrained by social and religious prejudices. He looked up at him in the tree, spoke to him, and shocked everyone by inviting Himself to dinner. This was a daring violation of a popular religious norm. As much as Zacchaeus was delighted by the privilege of hosting Jesus, many in the crowd complained bitterly and condemned the Lord’s action.

The encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus conveys an important lesson, teaching us not to judge others by stereotypes regarding their job, class, race, color, ethnic background, or moral reputation. Each person is created in the image of God and is of infinite worth. Each person ought to be treated with respect, dignity, and compassion as a human being. Not coincidentally, this is how IOCC approaches its humanitarian work, recognizing the image of God in all.



The foremost commandments are to love God with all our being and to love our neighbor as we love our own self (Mat. 22:36–40). The priority of love in Christianity means that Christians engage others, even when disagreeing with them on important issues, always with good will. Selfless love knows how to respect the personal dignity and background of others. Love both desires and seeks the well-being of others, prays for their guidance by God, and is ready to sacrifice itself for all people on ultimate matters of justice, freedom, and human dignity.

The life of Jesus was an offering of service to others in love. Christians ought to be known as people of divine love who are committed to honor and serve others, always ready to help others to face their struggles and achieve fulness of life by God’s guidance.

Christians can be the bridge to Jesus for those seekers today who are like Zacchaeus. That’s the urgent challenge for Christians as true followers of Jesus. Each Christian, not so much by words but by example, by their manner of living, can draw others to Christ. The more genuine the witness of faith, the more abundant the results by the grace of God.

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