

### **November 3, 2013 Zacchaeus Homily**

Dear brothers and sisters, in Nazi occupied France of the early 1940's there was no more reviled or repulsive French citizen than the collaborator. He was looked upon with disdain as a traitor, a turncoat, and an enemy of the French people. By befriendng the Nazis, collaborators placed themselves on the side of the conquerors and, in many instances, secured important positions in government as agents of the Third Reich.

Once the war ended, collaborators were shown no mercy. Following their arrest, many were publicly humiliated, others severely beaten, and, in many cases, executed for their betrayal of the nation. It is worthy of note that for years after the war, many were still suspected of the crime of colluding with the enemy during the early years of the war.

In today's gospel reading we are introduced to Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector (Lk.19:1-10) and agent of the Romans, the occupying power. He was loathed by the Jewish people for his association with the enemy. So despised was the tax collector that he was not permitted to offer testimony in a court of law. He was considered a public sinner!

Zacchaeus's status as an outcast and reprehensible figure makes Christ's words all the more surprising. He said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." Once again, Christ must have been a cause for scandal. Why single out a public sinner? Why not choose a more respectable Jew for a visit? The answer may be found at the conclusion of the gospel reading. We are told that "the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost." (Lk. 19:10)

For Our Lord, "house" is more than a building; it is also a dwelling. Christ wishes to enter the house of our life. His appeal to the tax collector may be helpful in understanding St. Paul's words, "It is not I that lives, it is Christ who lives in me."

By inviting Christ into his "house", a profound and lasting change could be seen in Zacchaeus's behavior... his gratitude is reflected in his concern for the needy. "Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor....." (Lk.19:8)

Has salvation come to "our house"?

Do we invite Christ into our house but only permit him to enter the rooms we seldom use, such as the basement, attic and closet? Has our attitude changed?

And what of our behavior?

Has Christ made a difference in our life? Are we grateful that we are the beneficiaries of Christ's favor?

Amen.