Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Nov 21st 2017

Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The details in today's Gospel spoke to me – a man named Zacchaeus – A Z-name like mine; he's short as I am; and he climbed a sycamore tree – I haven't done that, but I have one in my yard. It is the details like these that can draw me into the Gospel, to feel the connection to the people who lived at the time of Jesus and to the humanity of Jesus himself. Thinking of the humanness of Jesus makes me feel closer to him and as always in awe of the idea that he became man. Jesus had to think about where he might sleep that night and he knew there would be grumbling about his choice of Zacchaeus as his host. But who wouldn't want to stay with someone who greets the news that you are coming with joy? Once again, we see the example of Jesus treating all people, even those labeled as sinners, with such love and respect.

Zacchaeus as a wealthy man and a tax collector showed that he had truly absorbed the words of Jesus by offering to give up half of his possessions to the poor and to repay four times over anyone he had extorted. I need to follow his example, by absorbing and living the words of the gospel throughout my life. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost. Jesus found Zacchaeus in a tree. He can find me where I am and help me when I am lost, when I get caught up in things instead of people. He can find me when I am lost, when I take short cuts or don't do justice to those near me.

I have to confess that I am not sure I would be able to make the choice Eleazar did in the first reading. But I must strive to live out my faith with courage and nobility, to pray for his virtue. Even if I am not asked to make that kind of choice, I can remember his example when I am tempted to take short-cuts, to try to slide by, by being less that I should or could be.

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