

We have listened to two beautiful readings, full of deep and faith worthy spiritual teachings.

The first reading from the Book of Wisdom, describes the merciful expression of God, the Heart of God leaning towards humanity and all creatures whom he created.

In the Gospel, we listened to the “magical” words which each of us should strive to attain incessantly and which represents the goal we are trying to achieve.

This **word**, which synthesizes our faith and our entire religious practice is the word **salvation**.

Jesus states: *Today salvation has come to this house.*

Dearest friends, the reason for us being here is that we are seeking this salvation.

What we were taught throughout our entire religious education, catechism, what is constantly repeated is that we have been saved, that we must seek salvation, that we can be saved. However, when I talk to people, who tell me “they are saved”, I ask a simple little question: how does your being saved make you different from someone whom is not saved?

Normally people answer: “well, I have received grace of being baptized”. And this is true; salvation indeed **begins** with the gift of baptismal grace, but indeed this is only the beginning, **not the end**.

The word Salvation does not coincide with baptismal grace; grace, just as St Paul reminds us, is a down payment, awaiting for man’s complete redemption.

Then, people normally say: “yes but we will go to Heaven, the Lord has saved us, has given us his grace, we have been saved and we will go to Heaven.”

This is also true yet partially, extremely partially.

Today, this beautiful reading of the Gospel clarifies **the meaning of the word salvation**.

When the Lord says: “*Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today*” Zacchaeus, embraces him full of joy.

And when the self-righteous, the people who believed they were right, murmur, Zacchaeus exclaims: *Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.*”

It is only at this point that Jesus says: Today salvation has come to this house!

Yet if Jesus had already come to the house, wasn’t Zacchaeus already saved?

What then coincides with salvation?

The answer is: **with Zacchaeus’ conversion, his heart changing, with the changing of his way of seeing reality and interacting with reality; this is what salvation stands for.**

If we want to be even more sharp and assertive, we can state that Zacchaeus had not received his Baptism, right?

In fact, Baptism is given to us after Jesus' death, though here the Gospel says that salvation has already come to Zacchaeus' house.

Do you understand?

Jesus is the savior of this world because he wants to save us from this world.

What is "this world"?

"this world" is neither plants nor wild beasts...

According to St John, it is a way of life, under the influence of sin, of Satan, of jealousy, war, rivalry.

This world is the one we learn about every day on the news, it is what we watch on movies, a reality that we fear especially these days. This is the world we live in and it is almost entirely structured and obscured by man's sin.

It is manifested through greed, selfishness and the imposition of our opinion on others.

The pope, today is slightly contradicted by certain self-righteous people, by those who think that salvation is a myth. He is contrasted when he speaks about mercy, love, building bridges rather than walls to change the world...

The Pope called on the Year of Mercy because **mercy is Salvation: when mercy enters this world.**

How can mercy enter the world if it has not entered our heart?

How can we define ourselves Christians if we don't pursue mercy from day to night?

This is what salvation is about.

Salvation consists in having understood that we must bring good deeds to the world, we must protect the truth, always, even with your life, if necessary.

"and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." yet previously Zacchaeus had said: *I will give half of my belongings.*

There is another even more beautiful thing in my opinion, which precedes: the urge Zacchaeus has to seek for Jesus.

Jesus arrives at Jericho; the crowd is enormous, scribes, doctors of the law, Pharisees are present, among other curious people.

Who knows what was going on in Zacchaeus' heart.

He was a sinner; externally he was a malefactor, an outcast; internally, however, **what was his heart like?**

Certainly, his heart was searching for God, his heart was approachable, ready to receive.

We could interpret this episode as a **spiritual itinerary**:

- Zacchaeus hears Jesus is passing,
- He tries to meet him,
- He can't see him, so he climbs the tree,
- The Lords exclaims: "Zacchaeus come down";
- **Full of joy** (this is the second word I wanted to underline), he greets Jesus in his house, even before giving back his belongings

Indeed, how can one return the belongings, if not after having experienced the joy of meeting the Lord?

It is only this joy which can make us put the rest in second place.

Don't you agree?

Why don't we experience this joy?

Some could answer: "well, we haven't encountered Jesus..."

My answer would be: "what do you mean we haven't encountered Jesus!?"
We meet Him every Sunday.

We have met him though Baptism; he came to visit us, yes!

Our confirmation? Yes.

The Eucharist? Yes.

In a few moments, will we meet him? Yes.

So why are we not experiencing joy?

Why are we not changing the world?

Why are we not giving back what we have unjustly taken to return half of our belongings?

If it is not one it is the other: either this is a fairytale, similar to a utopia from the sixties, or else it is reality.

Hence, we must ask ourselves a question, think, **we must consider attentively, how we live our faith as we might be putting our very salvation at risk.**

We would be experiencing joy every day of our lives if only we discovered that Jesus is the savior who liberates our heart from worldly mundane destitutions.

I wish to leave you with a last message which is filled with **hope**; hope is the driver of Christianity.

Today salvation has come to this house!

Homily, 30th October 2016

Luke 19,1-10

p. G. Papparone o.p.

We listened to the Book of Wisdom.

We priests, perhaps, would expect immediate results. The Lord, says the Book of Wisdom, he is compassionate towards everyone, “*Yet you are merciful to all, because you are almighty, you overlook people’s sins, so that they can repent.*”

God was waiting for Zacchaeus to repent.

God is waiting for us to repent, for you; He is patient and surely his patience will last till the last day of our life.

When we are young, we think we have a lot of time ahead of us.

Right now, I see I’m surrounded by people with white hair; I have white hair myself, and a white beard though and I have no idea of how many days are left for me.

Last year I found myself in a situation where I was uncertain whether I would live longer.

The Lord is waiting for us, he loves us. Yet while he loves us, **how are we living?**

In sadness or in joy?

In freedom or in captivity?

Let us call upon the Lord so that he may make us discover the joy of encountering him, of experiencing the same immense joy that Zacchaeus experienced.

That same Joy which enables you to free yourself from the attachments and slaveries of this world.

Praise the Lord Jesus Christ.