

31st Sunday of Ordinary Time (C)
October 31, 2010

God offers us every opportunity and a variety of means to receive His grace, mercy, and love.

Are we open to receiving all this from God in our lives?

How many of us, at one time or another, have thought to ourselves: “

I’m just so terrible. Why would God ever forgive me? Why would He ever forgive someone who continues to repeat the same stupid mistakes time after time after time? He must be so fed up with me.”?

Certainly, I think we’ve all been here at one time or another. I know I have in my own life.

When we get to this point, we have 2 options:

- 1 – Give up, throw the towel in, and walk away
- 2 – Seek counsel, advice and a reason, to go on...specifically through the Scriptures. In other words, listen and reflect on the Scriptures and regain our hope.

Assuming that most, if not all of us, would choose the second option, we have every reason to have hope.

For instance, in our First Reading from Wisdom, we hear:

- Lord has mercy on all
- The Lord overlooks our sins that we may repent
- The Lord loves all things that are
- The Lord rebukes offenders little by little
- The Lord warns and reminds us of our sins that we are committing... not to judge us or condemn us, but so that we may abandon our wickedness and believe in the Lord once again

After hearing this, why would anyone despair?

God is offering us His undying mercy, forgiveness and love and He only asks that we recognize our sins and turn back to Him and believe in Him!

That’s all we are called to do.

He’ll take care of the rest – of washing away our sins and making us clean once again, which, by the way, he already accomplished by his death on the

cross. We just need to turn to God, abandon all that keeps us from being one with Him and receive His unconditional love.

How great and awesome and wonderful is that!

As we move into our Second Reading, we hear, from St. Paul, that God will bring to fulfillment (He will bring to completion) every effort of faith.

In other words, every attempt we make to grow in faith, God recognizes, accepts, blesses, and makes holy.

This is perhaps better understood in our Gospel Reading.

Zacchaeus – a chief tax collector and a wealthy man – attempts (does all he can) to see Jesus.

He runs through the streets and climbs a tree.

These were things that a grown man in that time just didn't do.

Running and climbing trees was a childish thing.

So, when Zacchaeus did them, he risked being ridiculed and humiliated, but he wanted so much to see Jesus.

Well, it turns out that his effort of faith pays off for him when Jesus sees him and invites himself to stay at the house of Zacchaeus.

But, this invitation meant more – it was an invitation by Jesus for Zacchaeus to recognize his sins, abandon them, and receive God's grace, mercy and love.

And Zacchaeus responds to this invitation very generously.

His response to God's grace was to give ½ of his possessions to the poor and pay back – 4 times over – anyone whom he might have extorted money.

And because he responded so faithfully, authentically, and wholly, Zacchaeus received the reward that we all yearn for as disciples of Christ – salvation!

Once again, how great, awesome, and wonderful is our God!

So, as we look in our own lives – our failures, faults, successes, and accomplishments – do we recognize all the chances and opportunities that God gives us to receive His grace, mercy and love?

When we do recognize this, what are we doing about it? How are we responding to this invitation?