

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given on November 4, 2007
Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time
Liturgical Year C

In the Gospel today, we hear about the crowds that were gathered. I think it must have been like the rolling rally for the Red Sox held this past Tuesday. Or maybe like being at the gates of Disney World with children or grandchildren. At the Colosseum for the Good Friday liturgy in 1984, John Paul II was serene and silent despite huge crowds and the risk of being nearly killed by a phalanx of Italian nuns!

The crowd in today's Gospel was like that. This is in Jericho, a big city, and Jesus is very popular at this point. Zacchaeus, on the other hand, is not popular. He is short and jostled by the crowd. He moves to the fringe of the crowd and up a tree, which increases the ridicule of the crowd. But Jesus knows him; Jesus calls him; Jesus is a friend of even the tax collectors and sinners. Zacchaeus hears the rumblings in the crowd and defends himself. He resolves to be a man of justice and charity. He resolves to move from the fringe to the center.

This week, an Austrian born 100 years ago took the last step before sainthood. Franz Jägerstätter lived in a small village near Salzburg. He married in 1936 after having had a daughter out of wedlock in 1933. After marriage, he had an encounter with Christ that changed him. He was a draft resister during World War II, as he found it an immoral war. He was beheaded, treated as someone on the margins. Despite all this, Christ was the center of Franz's life. The Church officially recognizes this, giving him the title of *Blessed*, raising him from the margins.

In today's first reading from the Book of Wisdom, we hear "You overlook people's sins that they may repent". Christ doesn't call saints, but sinners. Christ does not call for his followers plaster-of-Paris statues, but real people who want to be with him and be like him. Christians aren't born; they are made. Christians are called from the margins to Christ, and then are sent back to the margins to help people there come to Christ.

Let's remember that Christ is coming to our house today, and, as we meet him here, salvation is being given to us so that we can be made into better and better Christians and go to the margins so that others can meet him there through us.