What did you, Jesus, say and do?

By Pedro Méndez

Jesus, what did you say and do during your stay in Zacchaeus’s house so that Zacchaeus might have decided to turn to you and his neighbors in very selfless ways? How long did you stay there? Why did you invite yourself to his house, not only for a meal; but to stay!? We do not know the answers to these questions. The Evangelist Luke, for unknown reasons, did not pass them on to us. What we do know is that *Jesus’ staying at Zacchaeus’ house was a life changing experience for Zacchaeus and his family: “Today salvation has come to this house” (Luke 19:9a). What a beautiful affirmation, especially when it comes from Jesus Himself!*

Has salvation come to our lives and to our families? Let us ponder some aspects of *salvation and of being saved.* We know very little about Zacchaeus’s life; but we do know our own life story with its joys and challenges. Thus, we might have some insight from “what” we need to be saved. Following Pope Francis’ wisdom, I would say that *we need to be saved from all that separates us from God, our true selves, our neighbors (especially the poor), and creation*. These four-fold separations make us to be lost in our self-determination, which usually excludes the other, especially the poor. *But, Jesus, as is revealed in today’s gospel, “has come to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10) and, by doing so, to break all the walls that separate us from God, our true selves, others, and creation.* Consequently, a person who accepts Jesus’ self-invitation to stay in her/his house is moved from being lost in his/her self-determination to be found by God Himself which includes a true appreciation for herself/himself, for others (especially the poor and those we have done some wrong) and for material resources. A person who is found by God himself strives to set relationships right as Zacchaeus did.

Now, Jesus continues to *seek us* *and to offer us his salvation* today by abandoning Himself to us in a variety of ways, especially in our intentional celebration of the Sacraments. He continues to invite himself to *stay* in our house, i.e. our lives, our family, our job environment and in all the social circles we move around. The summit of Jesus’ self-invitation to our house is the Eucharist—the sacrifice by which we become one flesh with our Savior. Thus, Jesus’ salvation is not just an admirable moment in the gospel or an ideal; but a concrete event in our days—His passion, death and resurrection—that moves us from being lost to being found as Zacchaeus was.

I learned, in my seminary days, that it is not a good practice to impose, to the biblical passage, “something” that, for unknown reasons, the author did not convey. However, these unknown details might be an opportunity to pray with, which I call, “the unknown words and events of scripture.” Thus, by contemplating Zacchaeus’ attitude after Jesus’ staying at his house, one can *imagine* that Zacchaeus experienced, in the person of Jesus, *“who” was the way, the truth and the life, as well as “what” was really* *true, good*, *and beautiful*.

Have we heard Jesus’ self-invitation to our house—“Hurry and come down [from your sycamore tree, (which represents our prideful self-determination)], for I must stay in your house today” (Luke 19:5b) [to save you]? If we hear Jesus’ self-invitation today, let us allow Him to stay in our house, not only for today; but for every day of our lives! From here we will experience reconciliation and unity with God, our true self, the other (especially the poor) and creation. Wouldn’t you like to experience this! I would!