### LSW

children

Year C

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Images**

The disadvantaged gets ahead

**Points to note**

This is the favourite story of a priest I used to work with. It is because he was short, short like Zacchaeus! All of us are like that – we try to identify with someone in the Bible story that we hear about, someone like us. And that’s the key to facilitating with children: getting them to identify with a character in the story and this week Zacchaeus is someone whom children seem to identify well with – because if Jesus turned up, the children would also need to climb a tree to get a glimpse of him.

**Liturgy**

Acclamation before the Gospel

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Blessings on the King who comes, in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens!

Alleluia!

Gospel

Remind the children how a tax collector is often treated as an outcast of society in Jesus’ times because they work for the Romans, who are foreigners and because they tend to collect more than their due. Remind the children of the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector in last Sunday’s reading.

The Lord be with you.

*All:*  And also with you.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Luke

*All:*  Glory to you O Lord

(Lk 19:1-10)

Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the town when a man whose name was Zacchaeus made his appearance; he was one of the senior tax collectors and a wealthy man. He was anxious to see what kind of man Jesus, but he was too short and could not see him for the crowd; so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus who was to pass that way. When Jesus reached the spot he looked up and spoke to him: “Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I must stay at your house today.” And he hurried down and welcomed him joyfully. They all complained when they saw what was happening. “He has gone to stay at a sinner’s house,” they said. But Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to the Lord, “Look, sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek out and save what was lost.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**Dialogue**

How many of you is a younger child in the family? Do you feel like the elder one gets all the chances? *Get ready for a lot of complaints!! Get the children to talk about situations where they have been overlooked when going out (because the movie is ‘not for little children’, for instance). How did they feel about it? Careful that it doesn’t get to be a gripe session. Focus on feelings of disappointment, neglect, abandonment or even despair. How did they respond to the situation?*

*It may also be a good idea to explore the reaction of the elder siblings to such a situation. Were they aware that the younger brother or sister was unhappy about it? Did they do anything about it? Promise to bring something back, for instance? Yeah, sure there will be some kids who rejoiced that the younger sibling got their just desserts in being left behind!!*

*Discuss whether the state of affairs ever last? How did the younger child feel when they got all the attention again (eg., when everyone got back home), especially when they got some compensation for being left behind (eg., a little gift)? Happy, satisfied, redeemed. He who laugh last, laugh loudest.*

*Explain that this was what happened to Zacchaeus. He was short and never got the best vantage points. He was probably bullied in school because he was short. He seems to have been short-changed in life (excuse the pun). Jesus, however, always had a soft spot for those who are disadvantaged, particularly those who called on his help in the midst of their problem. Those whom we think are losers are often loved even more by Jesus. Draw the parallels with our discussion: those whom we think have lost out often end up with a better deal.*

*Explain also that Zacchaeus was not just short but also disliked by people because of his job. He was an outcast and has been pretty much a sinner. Jesus however loved him because he invited Jesus not only into house but also into his heart. He said sorry and invited Jesus to change his life and Jesus loved him all the more for it. Similarly, those of us who are in the doghouse because of something wrong we did can often change our fortunes by saying sorry and change over a new leaf.*

*Help the children to conclude that we should not be looking down on people who seem to have lost out because in losing, they often win Jesus’ heart.*