



# The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

74 Grange Road, Glen Huntly VIC 3163

☎ Telephone: 9401 6336

✉ [glenhuntly@cam.org.au](mailto:glenhuntly@cam.org.au)

🌐 [cam.org.au/glenhuntly](http://cam.org.au/glenhuntly)

ABN: 70548 570 366

---

## Homily at Mass 31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C – 3 November 2019

“To turn now to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we shall be gathered round him”. St Paul wrote his two letters to the Thessalonians, a town still to be found in modern Greece, around the year 51 – just 20 years or so after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel was already spreading around the vast Roman Empire. The Church was taking root, people were receiving baptism. Coming together for Sunday Mass was already a feature of Christian life. And the first Christians, while struggling with persecution as well as remaining faithful to the demands of a new life in Christ, were beginning to wonder when will Jesus return, when will he – as we continue to say in the Creed today and each Sunday – when he will “come again to judge the living and the dead”? Or as St Paul puts it today in such an attractive way, when will the time come when we – all of us who believe in Christ – when will we be gathered around Jesus, our King, Lord and Judge?

Having climbed down from the tree, Zacchaeus was glad to take up our Lord’s suggestion that they together make their way to Zacchaeus’ home: “I must stay at your house today” Jesus says. Did Zacchaeus use the opportunity to invite some others to his house as well, as we find in other places in the Gospel? Our Lord’s public ministry to crowds of people – preaching, embracing small children, feeding 5,000 and other miracles: the Gospels are filled with these stories. But we also find stories of our Lord’s personal encounters with individuals – ministering to lepers close up, touching the tongue of those who cannot speak, pasting mud mixed with spittle on the eyes of the blind, or as we heard two or three Sundays back, complementing the leper who returned to say “thank you”. What can we imagine of the conversation between Zacchaeus and Jesus? What word of Jesus touched Zacchaeus so deep down that Zacchaeus decided then and there to turn his life around, to give his wealth away to the poor, to refund his ill-gotten gains to those he had fleeced while collecting the hated Roman taxes?

“Today salvation has come to this house”. At Sunday Mass we rejoice in the gift of salvation – a word that comes from the Latin word ‘salus’ meaning ‘health’. Zacchaeus’ relationships with others were cut and broken: his fellow Jews regarded him as a thief for taking *their* money in taxes for the Roman occupiers. They also saw him as a traitor – where were his loyalties to his own people or to the Romans? Being a short man he probably knew well the sting of insult and mockery. All this breeds hate and resentment. When Jesus invited himself into Zacchaeus’ house he knew that his job was to restore Zacchaeus, to reconcile this man who began to see his own sins, and to heal hurt and division between Zacchaeus, his countrymen as well as the poor.

At Sunday Mass you and I find ourselves “gathered around Jesus”. He called Zacchaeus by name: so you and I are known to Jesus by name, that we find ourselves here in God’s House for Mass means that somewhere in our heart we have felt God call us today to the Church, and with joy, gratitude and faith we have said yes to his call and invitation. Here we experience salvation – healing as the Word of God speaks to our life, and Jesus makes his home, he comes to our House, in the Eucharist we celebrate and receive.

Also gathered around Jesus are the saints whom we honoured on Friday and the dear departed, our deceased parents and grandparents, family members and friends whom we remember and pray for on All Souls Day. When we think of the Church we think of the great community of salvation, all who have been bathed and purified in the Blood of Christ, all who share the gift of Baptism. The saints are those who have already completed their pilgrimage that begins in this life and reaches its joyful home in Heaven. In November we especially remember the dead, all those like us who hope for Heaven, who look forward to life with Christ and the saints. One step ahead of us, they still undergo purification and cleansing, what we call 'purgatory'. The Church teaches us very simply that our prayer, our sacrifices our offering of Mass helps the dead giving them comfort and winning them Heaven. In the family of the Church we are gathered around Jesus – the saints who stand before his throne; the dead who long for their Saviour; and us gathered at the Altar, embraced in the strong arms of our crucified Saviour, Lord and Friend Jesus Christ.