

## 31 (C)

*We've all heard of Leonard Cheshire. During the war he was awarded the Victoria Cross after completing a hundred bombing missions on heavily defended targets which would inevitably have cut short the lives of many innocent people. After the war with his wife Sue Ryde he established the well-known Cheshire homes for the sick and disabled. I wonder was this his way for making us for the unenviable part he played in the war.*

Zacchaeus also fully intended to make recompense for dodgy dealings which he got up to in his past as a collector of taxes. He tells Jesus he is willing to give half his money to the poor and pay back fourfold the people he had wronged. Wow, that's a turnaround.

Do we ever feel the need to make up for things we're not proud of in our past? November is designated by the Church as a month of prayer for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. Purgatory makes sense because even though people have repented of their sins in this life they may not have fully taken on board the consequences of their actions. For instance this could apply to fathers, and sometimes mothers who weren't there or didn't give enough quality time to their children in their formative years when they needed them most. Now that their children are young adults, these same parents may feel the need to make up for this and reveal an extra caring side to their character, howsoever belated this may be.

Another example might be If I gave my parents a hard time whilst growing up, the inner voice of conscience may be telling me that I show them extra love and attention as they get older. If they ask me to go that proverbial 'mile' with them, with a

willing heart, I will go two. I'll go even further and anticipate their needs sparing them the awkwardness of having to ask me. That's what loving one's neighbour means.

Some non-Catholic Christians used often tease us Catholics about running back and forth to confession whilst at the same time not facing up to the consequences of our failures.

Confession, which is gone out of fashion for many, is the first vital stage of the reconciliation process but there's more to it than that. Conversion involves a change of heart with a strong desire to atone for the times we've been less than honest with people. As in the case of Zacchaeus, this especially applies to money matters.

At a conference here on dementia recently we were told that people who take on powers of attorney for vulnerable and not so vulnerable parents often cut corners with honesty and award themselves way over-the-top amounts of money from the said parents' account which they are not really entitled to. We're told that's quite widespread.

I know Jesus atoned for all our sins on the Cross but he also offers us opportunities to be part of that expiation.

*For a small man, Zacchaeus must have felt ten foot tall when Jesus ended up in his house for lunch. Jesus is with me today in this Mass – He comes to my house in Holy Communion and sees all my efforts to atone for my sins and, like Zacchaeus, experience the salvation which He offers.*