

Homily

Wednesday, October 27, 2021



30th Week in Ordinary Time



“Strive to enter through the narrow gate.”

Lk 13:24

In today's Gospel, Christ continues to present us the demands of the Kingdom of God. Someone wants to know how many people would be saved. Jesus refuses to respond to this question and directs the attention of each individual to his or her personal responsibility. The gate is open, and entrance is free. There is no need to pay special fees or to pay bribes. However, the gate is narrow, and using an image well-known in the Middle East, a camel with too much baggage cannot go through it.

A few words on this narrow gate. Doubtless, it is the small gate that was found beside the main, large gate or even on the large gate. At nightfall, the large gate was closed, but this small gate remained for those arriving too late. This narrow gate was the size of a man, impossible to pass through several people abreast, but only one by one, and in any case, you had to have it opened for you and thus declare your identity.

Not only could people only enter one by one through this narrow gate, but it was not made for bringing merchandise through; you could

not enter weighed down by baggage or provisions; you could only enter empty-handed, destitute. In fact, the first condition for being among those who are saved is gaining awareness of one's own destitution, of one's own unworthiness.

Yes, this narrow gate only allows to pass those who have freed themselves of all illusionary ideas about themselves and their ability to save themselves on their own. This is not easy; it takes energy and will. Strive, the Gospel text tells us. The Greek word used gives us the French verb "to be in the throes of death." It involves a death to self.

Those who enter through the narrow gate are those who are aware of their unworthiness with regard to divine holiness. They are aware that God is the Totally Other. This awareness keeps them from placing God at their level, from imposing their reasoning and calculations on Him.

Entering through the narrow gate means doing away with any attempt to compare oneself to others; entering through the narrow gate means doing away with any attempt to assert oneself; entering through the narrow gate means doing away with any attempt to put others down. Such competition is deadly; it is an infernal spiral that engenders violence and adversity.

Yes, in order to enter through this narrow gate, we have no choice but to live in an unconditional way. Those who do not enter are themselves the ones who exclude themselves. Those who do not enter are those who deprive themselves of that grace out of pride. At no time does God close the gate on them; on the contrary, He invites them to do everything possible for the result to be otherwise.

At the end of these days of retreat, we are about to enter into the time of the General Assembly of the Company. In this chapel, we come to pray to Saint Vincent. May he help us to live ***Ephata!*** It is the Lord who calls us to go forth in order to go towards and encounter our

brothers and sisters in the world today. Let these faith-filled words of Vincent resound in us: ***“The spirit of God urges one gently to do the good that can be done reasonably, so that it may be done perseveringly and for a long time”*** (CCD I, 92).