

Homily - Lk. 13: 22-30
21st Sunday in Ordinary Time
21st August 2022

Ignacy Jan Paderewski, as you know, was a great Polish Pianist and composer. Now, someone once said to Paderewski: “Sir, you are a genius.” Hearing this, Paderewski paused for a moment and then he gently replied: “Madam, before I was a genius, I was a drudge.” He then continued: “If I missed practice one day, I noticed it; if I missed practice two days, the critics noticed it; if I missed practice for three days, my family noticed it; and if I missed four days, then, my audience noticed it”.

Fritz Kreisler was an Austrian born violinist and composer. Regarded as one of the greatest violinists of all time, Kreisler was known for his sweet tone and expressive phrasing. Now, after one of Kreisler’s concerts, a young woman said to him, “I would give my whole life to be able to play like that.” And Kreisler with a smile responded: “Well! That’s what I gave.”

Now in today’s Gospel, Jesus says: “Strive to enter through the narrow door”. Here, the word “strive” means to struggle. It also means to do our best; give it

our utmost, make every effort; try very hard. Yes! We need to strive because there are forces of evil within us and around us, trying to pull us down.

When the questioner in today's Gospel asked Jesus "How many will be saved?" he was probably assuming that the salvation of God's Chosen People was virtually guaranteed, provided they kept the Law. In other words, the Jews were under the impression that the Kingdom of God was reserved for them alone, and not for anyone else. But Jesus affirms that God wants everyone to enjoy eternal life with Him. At the same time, He stresses the need for constant fidelity and vigilance throughout our lives. Thus, Jesus reminds us, that, even though God wants all of us to be saved, we all need to work at it. And, how many will be saved in the end is a decision that rests with God and depends on His Justice which includes His Mercy.

Pope Francis in one of his general audiences on 25th August 2013 was trying to emphasize the importance of 'truly living a Christian life rather than letting it become a superficial label'. And this is what Pope Francis told the audience gathered in St. Peter's Square: "Jesus tells us that to be a Christian is not to have a 'label' but to

live and testify to faith in prayer, in works of charity, in the promotion of justice and in doing good”.

And when someone from the crowd asked him whether only a few will be saved, the Holy Father commented: “It is not important to know how many will be saved, but above all it is important to know the way of salvation. Jesus tells us that there is a door to enter into the family of God. And it is He himself. Everyone is invited to enter this door, to enter into His life, and then to allow Jesus into their lives, so that He may transform them, renew them and give them full and lasting joy”.

Well! God allows us to decide every day what road we will walk down and what gate we will choose. But His invitation, however is, to choose His way. In other words, the “narrow road” or “narrow gate” concerns our everyday living - our relationship with God and with one another. And to enter by the narrow gate involves being with the blessed ones – that is, ‘the poor, the peacemakers, the persecuted’, being salt and light consistently, choosing mercy over revenge and loving our enemies. It involves doing good deeds for the right reasons; it involves pursuing God’s justice instead of

fame and fortune; and it involves repentance, obedience, humility, righteousness, truth and discipleship.

One of the greatest examples for entering through the narrow gate to holiness was John Maria Vianney. He was the last in his class. In French and Latin, he was the last student. He failed in Theology studies. So, he was asked to leave the seminary. After that he was taught Theology privately and was ordained a priest in 1815. Three years later he was appointed to the parish of Ars, a place, where practically no one went to church. In a few years people began to come on pilgrimage to Ars. He became the most sought-after spiritual advisor. The cause of this miracle was nothing but the gracious touch of the Lord. And this miracle will happen to anyone who tries to enter by the narrow gate.

Are we ready dear friends to strive to enter through the “narrow gate” by prayer and supplication, diligently seeking deliverance from those things which would bar our entrance, and acquiring those things which would facilitate our entry. Are we ready to say “Yes to the invitation of Jesus? God bless you all, **Amen.**