



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

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"Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." Luke 13:30

Through the prophet Isaiah in the first reading, Israel was called to see that God fervently desires people of all nations to be saved. This is a hard lesson to learn, then and today. But Jesus takes the lesson to a new level in this passage from Luke.

For centuries the Church literally took this reading to heart, *"I come to gather nations of every language."* But the Church added its own condition that you must be baptized. In other words, without baptism it was taught that there was no salvation. Vatican II changed all that with its dogma on the universal call to holiness. In this theology people who have never heard the Christian Gospel can still be saved through Christ. It is their thoughts and deeds throughout life that is the measure of their goodness. In other words, every human person despite his or her beliefs can do good. Then sharing their good works creates the prime environment for an encounter with Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis said in a homily in 2013 that Our Lord created every human in His image and likeness. We are the image of the Lord, and as He does good, so all people are enjoined to take the precepts of this commandment to heart: do good and do not do evil. Says Pope Francis, "The Lord has redeemed all of us with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics. We must meet one another doing good." "But I don't believe, Father, I am an atheist!' so do good: we will meet one another there."

The Lord knows those who come from the same spiritual place as Him. Jesus comes from a heart set on fire with divine mercy. As we take on His Sacred Heart of mercy, we have a purified image and likeness that He will recognize when we *"knock on the door,"* and it will be open.

Entering through the narrow door begins with a desire to do good, and to love God and neighbor. This spiritual pilgrimage is a lifelong pilgrimage that must be traveled with like-minded brothers and sisters. Many do not take this seriously, but in every culture people *"from east and west, from north and south"* will be *"first"* in the spiritual domain as they take to heart what Jesus knew in his heart. Divine love makes brothers and sisters of us all. When we live this way, the Lord surely knows us, and the narrow door becomes the widest of gates.

Reflect on this reality of taking on Christ's divine mercy in your heart. In this way, eternal salvation will take care of itself. Strive to go out into the world with a balanced life of spirit and matter, the intersection between eternity and time. The grace of the Trinity changes hard habits, and in communion with others, can change the very structures of our community to become a united Eucharistic Community of peace on earth and good will toward all.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel According to Luke

Jesus went through one town and village after another,
teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem.

Someone asked him,
"Lord, will only a few be saved!"

Jesus said to them,
"Strive to enter through the narrow door;
for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able."

"When once the owner of the house has got up and shut the door,
and you begin to stand outside
and to knock at the door, saying,
'Lord, open to us,'
then in reply he will say to you,
'I do not know where you come from.'"

"Then you will begin to say,
'We ate and drank with you,
and you taught in our streets.'
But the Lord will say,
'I do not know where you come from;
go away from me, all you evildoers!'"

"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth
when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob
and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out.
Then people will come from east and west, from north and south,
and will eat in the kingdom of God."

"Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

The Gospel of the Lord

