

Tuesday of the Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 7:6.12-14): Jesus said to his disciples: “Do not give what is holy to dogs, or throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot, and turn and tear you to pieces. “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the Law and the Prophets. “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few.”

“Enter through the narrow gate”

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Today, Jesus makes us three important recommendations. We shall, however, pay attention to the last one: “Enter through the narrow gate” (Mt 7:13), in order to attain the plenitude of Life and be always happy, while avoiding going to perdition and be forever doomed.

If you look around you and around your own existence, you will easily verify that whatever is worthwhile is costly, and that all things having a certain level are subject to the Master's recommendation: as the Church Fathers have said with wisdom, “by way of the Cross all mysteries contributing to our salvation are fulfilled” (St. John Chrysostom). In her deathbed, an elderly woman who had suffered much in her life, told me once: “Father, if you do not savor the Cross, you do not desire Heaven; if there is no Cross there is no Heaven.”

All this contradicts our falling human nature, even though it has been redeemed. For this reason, in addition to facing up to our natural tendencies, we shall have to go against the tide because

of our environmental upbeat founded on materialism and the uncontrolled relish of our senses, that —at the price of not-being— long for getting more and more each time, to be able to enjoy the maximum pleasure.

When we follow Jesus —who said “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn 8:12)—, we realize that the Gospel does not condemn us to a boring and unhappy life in darkness; on the contrary, it promises and gives us the true happiness. We only have to review the Beatitudes and look at those who, having entered through the narrow gate, have been very happy and have made others happy too, while obtaining —for having believed in and waited for He who never let us down— the reward of self-denial: “An overabundant return in this present age and eternal life in the age to come” (Lk 18:30). The Virgin's “yes” is accompanied by humility, poverty, the Cross, but also by the prize to fidelity and generous surrender.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “When the priest offers Jesus on the altar and takes him somewhere, all people should bow their knees and surrender to the Lord, the living and true God, praise, glory and devotion.” (Saint Francis of Assisi)
- “The liturgy is ‘God's work’. We must dispose ourselves through a prayerful attitude, with discipline, peace (no rush!) and reverence: we are in the sight of God!” (Benedict XVI)
- “The way of Christ ‘leads to life’; a contrary way ‘leads to destruction’ (Mt 7:13). The Gospel parable of the two ways remains ever present in the catechesis of the Church; it shows the importance of moral decisions for our salvation (...)” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 1696)

Other comments

“Do not give what is holy to dogs”

Deacon Fr. Evaldo PINA FILHO

(Brasilia, Brazil)

Today, the Lord makes three recommendations: The first one, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, or throw your pearls before swine” (Mt 7:6), makes a contrast in which “assets” are associated with “pearls” and to what “is holy”; and “dogs and swine” to what is impure. Saint John Chrysostom teaches us that “our enemies are like us in nature but not in faith.” Although the earthly benefits are equally distributed to the worthy and unworthy, it is not so when it comes to “spiritual graces”, which are a privilege of those who are faithful to God. The right distribution of spiritual assets is related to the zeal for sacred things.

The second recommendation is the so called “rule of gold” (cf. Mt 7:12), which encompasses everything the Law and the Prophets recommended, like branches of a single tree: the love of one’s neighbor presupposes the love of God, from which it comes.

Doing unto our neighbor what we would have done to us implies transparency of actions towards the other, the acknowledgement of their similitude to God, of their dignity. Why do we want the Good for ourselves? Because we recognize it as a means of identity and union with the Creator. Since the Good is, for us, the only means to achieve life in its fullest, its absence is unconceivable in our relationship with our neighbors. There is no place for the good where falseness prevails and evil preponders.

The third and last one, the “narrow gate”... Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI asked us: “What does this “narrow door” mean? Why do many not succeed in entering through it? Is it a way reserved for only a chosen few? “ No! The message of Christ is that “everyone may enter life, but the door is “narrow” for all. We are not privileged. The passage to eternal life is open to all, but it is “narrow” because it is demanding: it requires commitment, self-denial and the mortification of one's selfishness.”

Let us pray to the Lord, who won universal salvation with His own life and resurrection, to gather us all in the eternal life Banquet.