

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 the dogs, or throw your pearls to the pigs: they might trample on them and even turn on you and tear you to pieces. So, do to others whatever you would that others do to you: there you have the Law and the Prophets. Enter through the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many go that way. How narrow is the gate that leads to life and how rough the road; few there are who find it».

«Do not give what is holy to the dogs»

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Today, the Lord makes three recommendations. The first one, «Do not give what is holy to the dogs, or throw your pearls to the pigs» (Mt 7:6), makes a contrast in which “assets” are associated with “pearls” and to what “is holy”; and “dogs and pigs” 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 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.

Lastly, the “narrow gate”... Pope Benedict asks 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.

«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 Crysostom). In her deathbed, an elderly woman who had suffered much in her life, told me once: «Father, if you do not savour 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 never 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: «Many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life» (Lk 18:30). The Virgin's “yes” is accompanied by humility, poverty, the Cross, but also by the prize to fidelity and generous surrender.