Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Gospel text (*Lk* 13:22-30): Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from. And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!' And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out. And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

"Lord, will only a few people be saved?"

Fr. Pedro IGLESIAS Martínez
(Ripollet, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, the Gospel raises the theme of the salvation of our souls. This is the essence of Christ's message and the "supreme law of the Church" (in fact, this is stated this way in our Code of Canon Law). The salvation of the soul is a fact insofar as it is a gift from God, but for those of us that have not yet crossed the threshold of death, salvation is still only a possibility. Will you be saved or will you be condemned? That is, will you accept or will you reject God's everlasting offer of love?

St. Augustine said "...he who destroyed in himself a good which might have been eternal, became worthy of eternal evil." We have only two possibilities in our life: either God or nothing, for without God nothing has any meaning. In this sense, when one does not partake in the essence of God, life, death, joy, pain, love, etc., are just concepts without any logic. When a person sins, he or she avoids the Creator's glance. God is constantly looking at the sinner with love, and in order not to force his freedom He expects a small gesture of willingness to get back to him.

"Lord, will only a few people be saved?" (Lk 13:23). Christ does not respond to this question. Therefore, it

remained unanswered, just as it is today, for “this is a mystery, truly inscrutable, which embraces the holiness of God and the conscience of man. The silence of the Church is, therefore, the only appropriate position for the Christian faith” (Saint John Paul II). The Church does not state any opinion about those who dwell in hell, but —based on Christ's words— it does state an opinion about its existence and the fact there will be many damned in the Final Judgment. And whoever denies this, whether clerical or lay thereby denies a truth of our faith.

We are free to turn our soul towards the Savior, and we are also free to be obstinate in our refusal to do so. Our death will seal our decision forever…

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “The Christian is not the result of persuasion, but of power” (Saint Ignatius of Antioch)

- “The Church does not grow through proselytism but through attraction” (Francis)

- “One enters into prayer as one enters into liturgy: by the narrow gate of faith. Through the signs of his presence, it is the Face of the Lord that we seek and desire; it is his Word that we want to hear and keep” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2656)