

21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

“Strive to enter through the narrow door.”

Luke 13:22–30

Today the Gospel places before us an image that is both sobering and deeply consoling: the narrow door. Jesus does not say the door is locked, nor that it is impossible to enter. He simply says it is narrow—and that we must strive to pass through it. This striving implies effort, urgency, and focus. It is not enough to drift casually toward the Kingdom of God, as though heaven were simply the natural extension of our earthly comfort. Salvation requires a deliberate turning of the heart, a daily choosing of Christ. The door is wide enough for every soul, but just the soul filled with love—it is not wide enough to bring our sins, our pride, our selfish attachments with us. These must be stripped away if we are to fit through.

The Gospel delivers a startling truth: people will say to the Lord, “We ate and drank in your company, and you taught in our streets.” In other words, they were near Jesus, but not transformed by Him. They knew His words, but never allowed those words to pierce their hearts. They dined with Him, but never let Him feed their souls.

Proximity to holiness does not guarantee participation in it.

It is heartbreaking to think of this: to sit close to a fire and never feel its warmth; to stand at the very threshold of heaven and yet never enter—that is the greatest loss of all. And so, Jesus warns us against complacency. It is not enough to have Catholic on our baptismal certificate, to come to church out of habit, or to hear the Gospel but remain unmoved. The narrow door challenges us: are we disciples only in name, or in truth? Do our lives reflect the heartbeat of Christ—compassion for the poor, forgiveness toward enemies, patience in suffering, faithfulness in prayer? Or do we fall into the illusion that merely being present in church is the same as truly belonging to Christ’s Body?

Yet, do not let this Gospel discourage you—it is not a word of despair but of hope. The Lord shows us the path. He does not demand perfection; He asks for authenticity. He asks that we be real with Him, and faithful in our effort. The narrowness of the door is not meant to exclude, but to purify. It strips us down to our true selves, where all pretenses, masks, and vanities fall away, until only love remains. That is what fits through the door—love alone.

And here lies another beautiful truth, one filled with consolation: Jesus speaks of the great banquet where people will come from the east and the west, the north and the south. Heaven is not reserved for a select few—it is offered to all nations, all peoples, all hearts who seek Him honestly. The door may be narrow, but it is open to the entire world. What matters is not where we come from, not our titles or achievements, but whether we walk with humility and persevere in love.

So, let us ask ourselves today: what must I set down in order to pass through that narrow door? Is it resentment I cling to? An addiction to comfort or control? A refusal to forgive? A divided heart, serving God one moment and the world the next? Jesus invites us to let go, to lighten our load, to walk the path that may seem harder but leads to eternal joy.

Yes, the door is narrow—but through it awaits an immeasurable gift: mercy that washes us clean, joy that knows no end, and a welcome into the very heart of God. Strive—strive with courage, strive with prayer, strive with love. And one day, when the door opens, may the Lord say to us, “Come in, beloved. The table is set. The feast is ready. Welcome home.”