

HOMILY SUNDAY 21-C (Homily 02)

“Live in the Kingdom”

(Isaiah 66:18-21; Psalm 117; Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13; Lk 13:22-30)

A nervous reader one Sunday ended the reading with the words, “This is the end of the world,” to which the congregation duly replied, “Thanks be to God.”

“Lord, will only a few be saved?” is a question posed to Jesus in the gospel. What do you think is the answer to that question?

Actually, that is a question that need not even be asked. We are not meant to be fretting about getting into heaven. All we have to do is learn to live in the Kingdom of God here and now.

The concern expressed in the Gospel about *how many* will be saved caused anxiety for many people at the time of Jesus. Jesus turned the question around to *how to be saved*, by entering the narrow gate.

The wide way looks attractive, more fun, filled with power and prestige, but disappoints in the end and leads to misery, addiction and death. The narrow way looks difficult, is very humble, and may involve some suffering, but it leads to peace, joy and fulfilment. The narrow way is the way of faith, the way of love for God, others and one’s self.

Jesus wants a mature faith relationship with him, not speculating on how many would be saved or when the end of time would be. Jesus invites us to live in such a way that we don’t have to worry about those questions; to live in a way that he knows us because we are recognizing him in one another.

Corbin Eddy in his commentary on this passage captures the spirit of this teaching of Jesus. The proper approach is to be hospitable towards strangers who come to us however, tentatively throughout the year. We do not always know “where they are coming from” and need the discipline and asceticism to make space for them to be at home enough to share that with us. We need to get to know them first. The question “where are you coming from” poses a number of other questions such as: Are you on a road? Do you know what road you are on and why you are on it? In other words, are you on a healing

journey, living in a dynamic and authentic way? Is your journeying real? Is there sincerity and truth in your journeying?

Luke consistently suggests that those of us who think of ourselves as “saved” and secure in our knowledge of what that is all about may not even be dealing with these essential issues ourselves. We may either be standing still or coming from the wrong place. The sense that others will come from the four directions, that the last will be first and the first last, turns upside down any tendency in organized religion to deify the size and shape of any particular door. The issue in hospitality for us who are at home here is less the size and shape of our door than inquiring about where our neighbours are coming from, and washing their feet and anointing their heads.

Mother Theresa of Calcutta had it right in her advice to her sisters: What you would want to do for Jesus, whom you cannot see, do to your neighbour in need, whom you can see, and you will be doing it to Jesus. She truly lived that teaching herself in caring for the abandoned and the dying in the streets of Calcutta.

The Eucharist that we celebrate now makes present the love Jesus has for us; heals us and empowers us to go out and love one another as he has loved us.

So, don't worry about how many will get into heaven; just decide to live in heaven, the kingdom of God, right here and now, by loving others as Jesus has loved us.