

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

Can you imagine if you got on a ship and the first thing you heard when you arrived on board was this conversation: "Captain, there will only be a few that make it through this voyage." I am sure you would wonder if you should be on this ship. You would, I feel, ask for clarification. I am sure you wouldn't think, "Well they have free alcohol and good entertainment so does it really matter if only a few of us make it?" You might think, "Why should I get on this boat? Do I really need to go on this journey?" I would ask that if I must be on this boat, how can I increase my chance of survival? Do I stay near the life boat? I feel I would ask many questions since the matter is life and death. Are we not in the same boat for our lives? Not one of us is going to get out of here alive. As far as we know, Jesus, Mary, Elijah and Enoch are the only ones who made it out of here alive. Two from the Old and two from the New Testaments. Looks like those ranks are filled. We are all headed for the same fate – death. Our Lord promises that it isn't the end but the next time around in everlasting life there is no rich or poor, healthy or unhealthy. There will just be Heaven or Hell, no middle class of the pretty decent. There you will have no lawyer who will help you get off on a technicality, no matter how much you have. There will be judgment by the One who knows everything and Judgement is just.

I do not know where you are from. That is a very interesting statement. It reminds me when, as a priest, a young person from the school or parish was surprised that I was out and about and questioned me, "Father, shouldn't you be in the church?"

It could not be that the Lord does not know where we are from since He knows everything. It would seem to make more sense that we were not where we were supposed to be. That place being inside the house. Why are we to be inside the house? Well, through our Baptism we promised to be inside the house and not camped outside. Meaning that we would stay in grace, and, if we sin, we would do all that we could to get back into the house through the narrow door of Confession, Baptism and the life of grace.

It seems that there is a common Idea that it is not good or fun to be in the house, but rather you need to get out and explore. We constantly honour and glorify the lives of people who live outside the house and only are sort of decent, who give some lip service to Jesus. Look at many famous people - they glorify a life of sin, drug abuse, sexually perversion, a life of greed and excess. That is 'the life' my friends. We rarely see the other side of it except in the tabloids highlighting the million-dollar divorces and rehab (if they are lucky) and the heart break and the hurt. The abortions, death cheating, anxiety, fear, paranoia, the drug overdoses, the bankruptcy, the people they destroyed on the way up. The general emptiness of their actions and lives. That a bit of yoga, some animal activism and a vegan diet will somehow forgive the hellish life you have lived. In truth, the world is trying to tell you to balance that, saying, of course, you don't want to go to Hell but is Heaven worth suffering for? Wouldn't it be best to have Heaven and Hell together? This was the way of one fellow who knew he was living a life of Hell and was on the road to Hell. He lived in sexual perversion, drugs and greed, and when a priest told him this he said, "Don't worry, Father, I will repent at the end so I can go to Heaven." And he was lucky, sort of, he had a chance just before he died to go to Confession. The Priest

who he told not to worry came to him on his death bed and heard his confession. However, when the priest went to give absolution to forgive the man's sins, he could not remember the words. He tried in Latin, Spanish and English and, though he had given absolution many times, he could not recall the words. He sent a man back to the Church to get a book with the words in it and explained exactly where it was, which was a very clear and obvious place. But yet, the man was unable to find it. The man who decided to wait to the last minute died while the priest left to find the book, which was exactly where he told the other man. *I do not know where you are from.*

We need to take these words seriously: *Enter through the narrow gate.* Stay in the life of grace. But we also need to dispel the lie that the life of grace, of Heaven, is not better than a life of Hell and sin. Yes, for certain, sin is a temptation, a powerful temptation. It is powerful because it works on instant gratification. It works on cheap thrills and leaves us in misery. We must not judge things in life by how much we are drawn to them, how much we are tempted to do them, but by what happens after, how we feel after. The effects of the experience after are what we need to judge. The life of grace works the opposite of the life of sin. With sin there is immediate pleasure and long-term pain and hurt. With grace there is initially sacrifice but long term benefits. It is a lie that those we glorify are living 'the life', that they are most of the time living 'the death'. Sin brings terrible consequences. One of its terrible, earthly consequences is its enslavement through pleasure. Think of two things - smoking grass or cutting the grass. One brings immediate pleasure and then paranoid feelings and irritability, terrible health effects. The other is a suffering to begin with but brings about the joy of accomplishing something and good health effects.

Because of the power of sin to lie, to promise big things and never come close to their fulfillment, we need a relationship with Truth to combat the lies. There are so many lies and confusion and sin bring more confusion and bad choices that hurt us more. I remember the first time I really tried to make a good confession. After that experience, it was the first time I was able to follow God. I was free and stayed free for a long time. If we want to be free and want to be saved, we have to pray for it. The world lies about what is good. Our relationship with Jesus is what sets us free. Our praying to love Heaven above earth will help us to have a free life. That starts with Confession. How very important is confession for our souls. Sin enslaves us and puts us outside of the house. We must pray to know the truth. We must pray to want to enter through the narrow gate. We cannot do it on our own. On our own we can easily get outside of the house. On our own we will learn to call good bad and bad good. Only in grace will we be able live in the house of God. When the door is shut we won't be knocking on the outside. We get grace because we ask for it. We get grace when we are ready to remove the obstacles of sin from our lives and that happens when we pray for it. Let us take a moment right now to ask God to give us the grace to make a good confession and to desire to love Heaven about earth.