

AUGUST 25, 2019
Sunday of the 21st Week in OT
Lk. 13: 22-30

COMMITMENT TO FOLLOW THE LORD

The butterfly must experience a tremendous transformation, before becoming a beautiful butterfly. One day a small gap appeared in the cocoon, through which the butterfly had to appear. A boy, who accidentally passed by, stopped and watched how the butterfly was trying to get out of the cocoon. It took a lot of time, the butterfly was trying very hard, and the gap was as little as before. It seemed that the power would leave the butterfly soon. The boy decided to help the butterfly. He took a penknife and cut the cocoon. The butterfly immediately got out, but its body was weak and frail, and the wings were barely moving. The boy continued to watch the butterfly, thinking that now its wings would spread, and it would fly. However, that did not happen. The rest of its life, the butterfly had to drag its weak body and wings that weren't spread. It was unable to fly because the boy did not realize that an effort to enter through the narrow gap of the cocoon was necessary for the butterfly, so that the life-giving fluid would move from the body to the butterfly's wings and that the butterfly could fly. Life forced the butterfly to leave its shell hardily, so that it would become stronger and would be able to grow and develop. We too, if we could live without meeting difficulties, we would not be viable. Life gives us challenges to make us stronger.

In our gospel for today, someone from the crowd ask him about how many people will be saved at the end of time. Will there be few? Only the chosen people of Israel? Only the just and the righteous? We notice that Jesus doesn't answer his question directly. The question of the person was based on the assumption of many rabbis that all Israel would be saved and gain entry into God's kingdom, except for a few deliberate

sinner who excluded themselves! For them, they, the Jews were specially chosen by God when he established a covenant relationship with them.

But Our Lord Jesus Christ amazed his listeners by saying that one's membership as a people who have entered a covenant relationship with God does not constitute automatic entry into the Kingdom of God. Jesus also asserts that many from the Gentile (non-Jewish) nations would enter God's kingdom. The invitation of God is always open to Jews and Gentiles alike. In our gospel, Jesus Christ is teaching us, it is not important exactly how many will be saved, what is important is living with a clear and responsible attitude in order to welcome salvation from that Good God. And how we can gain that Kingdom? Jesus said: 'Try your hardest to enter by the narrow door'. In this way, salvation is not something one receives carelessly from a permissive God, not a privilege of an elect few, it is not enough to be children of Abraham, it is not sufficient to have known the Messiah, or to have heard and seen him. What is also needed is to follow him.

We are all invited to 'enter by the narrow door' which considering another saying of Jesus: 'I am the door; the one who enters through me, will be saved' (John 10:9). My brothers and sisters, it means 'following Jesus'; learning to live as he did; taking up his cross and trusting the Father who has raised him from the dead.

There is a cute story about children at the children's catechism class. One Sunday, the children were being taught the concept of getting to heaven. Teacher asked them, "If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale and gave all my money to the church, would that get me into Heaven?" "NO!" the children answered. Teacher asked them, "If I cleaned the church every day, trimmed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into Heaven?" Again, the answer was, "NO!" Teacher smiled. "Well,"

she continued, "Then how can I get into Heaven?" A five-year-old girl shouted out, "YOU GOT TO BE DEAD."

Jesus is saying, we must be more than just 'dead' to enter heaven. We need to actively strive toward heaven, and it should be the top priority in our lives. My brothers and sisters, if we want to enter and remain citizens of God's kingdom, we must follow Jesus in the way of the cross, one must struggle against the forces of temptation to sin and whatever would hinder us from doing the will of God. And the good news is that we do not struggle alone, we are not fighting alone, God is with us and his grace is enough! So, let us follow the Lord with all our hearts, our mind, our soul, do whatever He command us to do, that is, love your God and love your neighbor, serve your God and serve your neighbor. So, we hear the Word of God in this Eucharistic celebration, after the mass, let's do one act of kindness, the result will be one step closer to heaven, and the more we do this every day, the more we become citizens of heaven.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus, may I never distrust your guiding presence and your tender love and mercy towards me. Through the gift of your Spirit, fill me with determined faith and courage to trust you always in all things and in every situation, I find myself in. May your love set my heart aflame with love for You who are my All. Amen."