
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."
Our Scripture Reflection

It's amazing to watch the huge amount of effort (and money) people will put into raising children, learning a sport or hobby, in their cars and jobs, etc. But what about the most important possession we have in this life??? Our faith in God. How often does God settle for the "crumbs" of our efforts! However, in today's Gospel reading, Jesus warns us that we need to rethink this. "Strive to enter through the narrow gate", says Jesus. That means the serious disciple, the true disciple, must put forth a genuine effort at all times. And the beauty of it all....the more we do the more peace and joy we will have in our lives.

Food for your Journey

Saints, it is said, are the sinners who go on trying. Holiness, the Spirit-filled life, is a life of good works done in Jesus' name with the intent to bring honor to him. I see in the Word that those who believe and are filled with the Spirit are to make a difference in their world. If, somehow, Christians are not having a positive influence in our homes, schools, communities, workplaces, government and local congregations -- wherever we come into contact with the world -- then there at least must be the suspicion that our claim to Christianity is self-deception at best, or an outright lie at worst. Holiness is a verb. The Spirit-filled life is not a philosophical belief as much as a lifestyle. The power of the Cross is the power for a changed life which sees others' needs and responds to those needs. Too many who call themselves by the name of Christ know little of what it truly means to be in him. Yesterday, I was at a conference where pastors and church leaders of many different denominations from all over Toledo had gathered. While there, I witnessed an exchange between one of those leaders and a lady taking orders for the material being promoted. I was shocked as I heard the dignified, well-dressed church leader respond with rude speech and an obnoxious attitude. We are the Highway of Holiness for the world. It is our lives, our service, our positive impact which points to Christ or validates the world's opinion that Christianity is a hoax and Christians are hypocrites. Sheldon Vanauken in A Severe Mercy writes: "The best argument for Christianity is Christians: their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians -- when they are somber and joyless, when they are self-righteous and smug in complacent consecration, when they are narrow and repressive, then Christianity dies a thousand deaths."

Forget your schedule. Forget your personal preferences. What are you doing to bring glory to God? In what ways are you being the Highway of Holiness to the world in which you live? Are you a road sign pointing to the narrow gate of life, or merely part of the herd heading to a horrendous hell?
--Rick L. Upchurch,
Devotionals For Living a Holy Life in a Postmodern Age

A Prayer from the Heart

Dear God, Faith is the gift that I receive from You that gives my life meaning. When I, focus on You and put You first, life truly is worth living even in the difficult times. Be with me, Lord, and help me to grow closer to You. Amen