

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Gospel of Luke often uses images associated with healing. There is a tradition that Luke himself was engaged in the healing arts of his day. He was familiar with health and sickness. Thus his Gospel (more than the others) often brings forth questions concerning salvation. The concept "salvation" relates both to healing and being "saved" by God. Thus, this Sunday, we hear the story of someone who wants to know about how many are going to be saved. Will it be just a few, or many? Jesus could have responded that only God knows the answer to that question but he took the occasion to make another point: whoever is saved and is spiritually healthy will be those who have focused on living the journey to the Kingdom, and not so much on what's on the other side.

They will have to get to know Jesus and his message and seek to put his teachings into practice, day by day. Doing all that requires attention and discipline, a refined focus, because the doorway to the Kingdom of God is narrow. Just belonging to a group or being first in line won't work. It's about being a good disciple. Being a good disciple means loving in the same way that Jesus does. For some that may be too difficult.

A Gospel Word for the Home

Luke 13:22–30

Also in this Gospel is the important idea that those who seek salvation will be coming from all directions. This is an important point to make to those who think that it's just one kind of person or group that will be saved. No, those who will be seeking "the way" and eventually be included in the Great Banquet of Heaven will be of all kinds, the full spectrum of personality types, from all social classes, from all cultures, all religions, all parts of the world. So there's an interesting tension in today's Gospel: narrowness on the one hand and broadness on the other.

This reminds us of other parts of the Gospel that offer a very inclusive invitation attracting disciples to Jesus. It could be anyone! The Gospels indicate that Jesus seems especially close to the poor, the needy, the marginal, and even "sinners." Such openness strengthens the impression that we might be surprised as to who will enter God's Kingdom. We also have to keep in mind who's in charge: God who has created and loves everyone. If each of us can have a similar orientation to others, we may have found "the narrow gate."

Parent Survival

The number one religious worry of parents concerns passing on their religious faith to their children. "Will our children have faith?" is a huge concern. More often, the question shapes into "Will our children have our faith?" This is no small matter, and as parents we would like to be able to ensure a positive response to that concern. But we all know this is not the way it works.

Fortunately for Catholics we no longer hold that salvation is only for those of our faith. The Second Vatican Council was quite clear on that when it calls us to respect how God works with all faiths, and all peoples. As parents, we can act responsibly in providing our children with the best religious education that's available to us. And most importantly, we can serve as good witnesses to living our faith. Parental influence is without question the most important ingredient in passing on the faith. But our effort and our actions cannot guarantee results, at least the ones we desire. In the end, what's important is that we love and respect our children. And let God do the rest.

Car or Meal Talk

Discuss how we trust that God respects all people to help us respect others, both those who are like us and those who are not.

One-Line Prayer

Faithful Father, we thank you for loving all of us as you value each one's goodness. Help us to stay focused on the narrow opening to life in your Kingdom. Amen.