

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time \_ Year C

August 24, 2025

St. Edward's Parish

Friends, the Gospel today begins with a question that has likely crossed our own minds: “Lord, will only a few be saved?” We may have similarly wondered if many will enter heaven or will it only be a few. To go deeper into this question that was put to Jesus, it is helpful to recall what comes before it, namely, two parables that describe the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The first parable is that the Kingdom of God is like a small mustard seed that grows to become a large tree, and birds of the air come and nest in it. Second, it is like a small amount of yeast that is mixed with much flour until all the flour is leavened. These parables present the Kingdom of God as a reality that begins small but expands to reach out very far. This is the pattern for God’s plan of salvation that unfolds through the Bible: it begins small in the Old Testament with the chosen people of Israel, the Jews. Then with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament, it expands to the whole world. We read about this expansion especially in the Acts of the Apostles. When we speak about the Catholic Church, *Catholic* means universal, indicating that the Church gathers people of the whole world to God. The first reading from the Prophet Isaiah (written centuries before Jesus) gives a glimpse of this plan that will unfold: “I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory, and I will set a sign among them” (Isa 66:21).

With the above in mind, the person in the Gospel who asks, “Will only a few be saved?” seems to be asking if salvation is for just a small group, namely, the chosen people of Israel, or for everyone. Notice how Jesus does not answer this question directly. He does not say *how many* will be saved. Instead, He focuses on the *manner* we must approach salvation: “*Strive* to enter through the narrow door”. It is possible for many to be saved, but we must be willing to strive for it. Jesus notes at the end of the passage that “people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God”. God desires all people to be saved (see 1 Tim 2:4); however, it must involve our sincere effort and cooperation. Because of this, Jesus acknowledges the sad reality,

“many I tell you will try to enter but will not be able.” It is not because God wants to keep people out, but many will not strive for heaven.

To the one who asked the question, Our Lord is reminding him that it is not enough for him to be born a Jew, or to have lived around Jesus and heard His teaching. He must sincerely choose faith in Jesus to be saved. We could apply the same to ourselves as Catholics. It is not merely enough for us to be baptised or have grown up in a Catholic environment, but we must also choose. For many years, I think we have contented ourselves with being “cultural Catholics”. By that I mean that the Catholic faith has just been a part of the background of our lives, and we assume that is sufficient for salvation. But Jesus throws cold water on this. We also must make a personal choice for Jesus and strive to enter the Kingdom of God. Recall Our Lord’s words: “Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ But the Lord will say, ‘I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evil doers!’” A good question to ask ourselves is: Do we really strive to know Jesus and to be close to Him, to listen to Him, to practice and understand our faith?

This month many of us have been immersed in the Canada Games. These events give us a glimpse of our ability to strive for what we consider important. People are willing to make tremendous sacrifices to excel in sports, even from a very young age. Not only sports, but we do the same for careers, education, music etc... God has given us a remarkable capacity to strive. Is it unreasonable for our Lord to tell us that we must strive for what is truly most important, eternal life? Eternal life is offered to all and with the grace of God we can be saved, but it will demand a sincere effort on our part. As we meditate upon this passage, it may also be a good inspiration for us to share our faith and extend the invitation to others to know Jesus and choose Him. Perhaps you might think of inviting someone to Mass, encouraging someone to return to Confession, or simply share with someone your own experience of coming to know and choose Jesus.