



ENTER *by the* NARROW GATE

MATHEW 7:13

Monthly Reflection:

September 2020

The image of gates, doors and paths recur in the scriptures and they bring different pictures to our mind: of hope, safety, opportunities, beginnings, directions and destinations. Jesus brings our attention to a different type of gate, the “narrow gate”, in his Sermon on the Mount. “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” (Matt. 7:13-14)

Jesus presents us a picture of the choices man has; basically, a choice between “life and death” (cf. Deut.30:15,19). Given such a choice, anyone would choose life. However, the choice of ‘life’ demands entering through a narrow gate and walking through a hard way. Jesus also tells that few find out this narrow gate and hard way that leads to life. The narrow gate can be found only by those who seek it intentionally and those who ask for it. Like a sportsman who trains himself to win or a student studying to pass in a competitive exam, a focused and persistent effort will help us find the narrow gate. In contrast, the wide gate and easy way are found by anyone; in fact, if you are not seeking the narrow gate, you will end up at the wide gate and the easy way.

The gate is narrow not because it is oppressive or severe as to restrict any one’s entry. It is narrow to contain our pride which bloats us, and to restrain our fears. To enter through the narrow gate, we have to trim ourselves by “laying aside every weight and sin that clings so closely” (cf. Heb. 12:1) to us. We need to lay aside our pride, by accepting our state of sinfulness and our need for forgiveness. We need to lay aside our fears about who God is and our identity in Him.

Pope Francis in one of his Angelus addresses in 2019 said, “To save oneself, one must love God and neighbor, and this is not comfortable. It is a ‘narrow gate’ because it is demanding; love is always demanding, it requires commitment, indeed, an ‘effort,’ that is, a firm and persevering will to live according to the Gospel. St. Paul calls it ‘the good fight of faith.’ It takes an effort every day to love God and one’s neighbor.” Let us reflect on the things within us that hinder us from entering through the narrow gate.

Jesus invites us to enter by the narrow gate and is waiting for each one of us with open arms of mercy, to embrace us and offer us his forgiveness. Jesus himself is the door (Jn. 10:7,9) and “no one comes to the Father, except through Him (Jn. 14:6). As we enter through Him, He enters in us and we pass through him into the threshold of a radical new life, a life with a renewed sense of purpose, and a new, deeper and higher level of relationship with God. Transformed by grace and power of the Lord, we “set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth’. (cf. Col. 3:2)



There are sufferings, persecutions, temptations and trials on the way. Sometimes we are tempted by the wide and easy way the world travels, which tries to entice us with cheap, fleeting attractions. Or we fall due to the weight of our pride and the burden of our sins. Do not be disheartened; we have hope because we have a model, 'Jesus the way' himself, who walked before us and "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:2). Learn from the gentle and lowly heart of Jesus, taking His yoke of humility by emptying of our self and making burdens light by casting our sins at the foot of the cross. And by His grace working within us, we are able to get up and "run with perseverance the race that is set before us (cf Heb. 12:1).

As we sing in an old Christian song, "I'm rejoicing night and day, as I walk the narrow way, for the hand of God in all my life I see...", we rejoice in walking the narrow way because we know "that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (Rom. 8:18). Moreover, "we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (cf. Heb. 12:1), of saints, who chose to walk the narrow and hard way, and who continue to motivate us and intercede for us during this journey.

So 'through Him, with Him and in Him', we journey towards the glorious life of the Trinity to which we all have already been called and made partakers. Life then is not the final destination; it is the journey itself. As Jesus Youth, we intently seek the narrow gate and to walk the narrow way. However, we also know many people who are presently on the wide path that leads to destruction. We then are called to evangelize; inviting people to believe and repent, and leave the wide path, and set out on the narrow path that is so true, good, and blessed—the path which turns out to be Jesus Himself.

Pope Francis says, "Mary our mother, who can be invoked under the title 'Gate of Heaven', herself entered through the narrow gate, and will help those who ask. The Blessed Virgin Mary is a gate that exactly follows the form of Jesus: the gate of the heart of Jesus, demanding, but open to all. May the Virgin Mary help us in this."

