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## 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time - 21 August 2022

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# 21 August 2022

## Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

### Introduction

Jesus did not come to invite only a select few into the kingdom, but the whole world. The readings of today's liturgy point to the universal nature of God's saving activity. However, there is a paradoxical element to Jesus' invitation, it requires entering through 'the narrow door'. Not everybody automatically gains entry, only those who accept and respond to the open invitation will be counted among the saved.

### Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came to fulfil the words of the prophets.  
Lord, have mercy.

You are the way, the truth and the life.  
Christ, have mercy.

You lead us to the Father.  
Lord, have mercy.

### Collect

*The oration*

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful  
to unite in a single purpose,  
grant your people to love what you command  
and to desire what you promise,  
that, amid the uncertainties of this world,  
our hearts may be fixed on that place  
where true gladness is found.

The relationship of the Christian people to God is lived out in a world in which change and vicissitude are constants. Amidst this unstable and transitory

environment, the community is united in one will when their hearts and minds love what God commands and desire what he promises. Through this love and desire, the hearts of the faithful are fixed on true joys, and the community is one in God and one in what it pursues. This gives the community stability and direction in the midst of constant change.

Love of the precepts and desire for the promises is an entirely fitting response to God's own love for the faithful, which is evidenced in his precepts, promises and the unity of the community. The precepts are ordained towards love of God and neighbour, while the promises denote complete fellowship with the God who is love. Despite the inconstancy of life on earth, love of the precepts and desire for the promises already offers a foretaste, albeit transitory, of the joys and unity of heaven. (Gerard Moore)

## **First Reading**

### **Isaiah 66:18-21**

Today's first reading is taken from the final chapter of Isaiah. It points to a splendidly magnified Jerusalem, a symbol of the Lord's presence with the people of God that will draw the whole world to witness God's glory.

## **Responsorial Psalm**

### **Psalm 116. R. Mark 16:15**

*Go out to all the world; and tell the Good News.*

A simple yet powerful psalm of praise is offered today; let the whole world exalt the Lord for the Lord's love endures forever.

## **Second Reading**

### **Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13**

Persevering in faith is not always easy. We get knocked around and can feel wounded in mind and body. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us to persevere as the reward of peace and goodness comes with such devotion. Further, wounds that come along due to our commitment to faith are never left unattended by our loving God. Through our faith, we will be made strong again.

## **Gospel Reading**

### **Luke 13:22-30**

Jesus does not set a limit on who can enter the kingdom. The limit is only set on how we respond to the invitation. Such an invitation is underscored with a call to humility,

for those who are now first might find themselves last when it comes to being at the feast of the kingdom.

## Reflection

Jesus' focus on the critical nature of how his followers should respond to the kingdom of God continues today. In today's Gospel scene, the person who approaches Jesus and asks a question is perhaps motivated by some of what we have heard in recent weeks. Given the urgent preparedness that being a Christian disciple entails (Lk 12:32-48, the Gospel reading from two weeks ago) and the sometimes divisive nature that our dedication to God seems to require (Lk 12:49-53, the Gospel reading from last week), is it likely that only a few will be saved?

If so, the question may well be somewhat leading. That is, the questioner is suggesting that only a few will be saved and is looking for confirmation. This is perhaps even more probable given the verses immediately preceding our Gospel references today have spoken of small things with a big impact. The mustard seed, among the smallest, has been used as a symbol of the kingdom that when it is grown becomes a large bush able to support much avian life (13:18-19). And then yeast is used as a further example, of which only a small amount is needed to make a significant batch of dough, giving vitality and body to the bread that is finally produced (13:20-21).

If the pattern were being followed, and if Jesus were to give a simple answer, then one would expect something like, 'truly only a few will be saved'. However, Jesus, in his common style, does not answer the question directly. Rather, he leaves the actual answer somewhat open. Instead, he shifts the focus from who is saved to what sort of person is saved.

Firstly, Jesus indicates that those saved are not simply those who appear to be 'in the club'. There is an historical context to this Gospel reading where Luke is pointing out that those who are closest to the revelation of God, that is those steeped in the tradition of Israel, the first people of God, do not automatically gain entry by virtue of proximity. Instead, and this echoes the universal call of the first reading from Isaiah, it is all the corners of the world, those who would seemingly be quite distant from the kingdom that will be found very much at the centre of it.

However, this is not simply a point of historical context. Today we too can feel were 'in the club' simply by proximity to godly things or because we label ourselves Christian. It is a feature of human nature to fall into a place of self-assured smugness as we consider ourselves righteous while comparing ourselves to others. Jesus clearly warns that those who place themselves first risk finding themselves last when the final reckoning is done.

Even those who 'eat and drink' with the Lord may well find themselves barred from entry as if they were completely unknown, rejected because they are 'wicked people'. The lectionary translation of *ergatai adikias* to 'wicked people' risks missing a certain nuance. Most modern Bible versions translate that phrasing in v. 27 into 'evildoers' which is closer to the Greek in that it stresses the 'doing'. The literal Greek translation

would be something like ‘worker of unrighteousness’. The point being is what sort of proximity we have to goodness and godliness, or what we believe we are, or even what we believe in is not going to be enough. What we *do* in response to our convictions of belief will be the determinant of whether we are recognised by the master when it comes time to sit at the table in the kingdom.

In other words, what Jesus seems to be suggesting in all this is that we should not be worried about the number of people who are going to be saved, or even if we ourselves are going to be among that number. Rather, we should be worried about what we are doing. Are we ‘evil-doers’ or ‘good-doers’, are we workers for righteousness or workers for unrighteousness? We have been presented with the importance of our response to Jesus a number of times as we have journeyed through our liturgical season, today it is given a bit more shape – the right response should be one that is active, it ‘does good’.

It has become common parlance in sports coaching to speak in a similar vein. One often hears coaches and players talk about their focus being on the process rather than the end (or at least that it should be). Everybody plays to win, everybody trains to be the best, but winning and being the best is the end goal. What matters is the process to get there. One focusses on the process, what one needs to do in the here and now. The end goal: scoring more points, the winning of enough games and, ultimately, winning championships takes care of itself if the process is paid due attention. One should not focus on the winning, but on the process to get there.

In some ways Jesus is acting as our coach for successful kingdom living in today’s Gospel. Do not worry about who is in or not. Do not worry about the goal of salvation. That will take care of itself if we attend to the process. If we do what we are called to do with what is placed in front of us, the rest will take care of itself. Love our brothers and sisters in our midst. Love and serve those who feel broken in spirit or body. Act with moral fortitude even when it is easier and even expected to do otherwise. Be consumed with being doers of righteousness in the immediacy of our lives. This is what makes us known by God and, in turn, allows us to truly know the Lord.



From East to West they will  
come to share the banquet  
of God’s reign.

# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

We are called to go out to all the world and spread the good news. As we do what Christ has asked us to do, we offer our needs to God.

## Petitions

Let us pray for our church leaders, especially Pope Francis, along with the leaders in our clergy, religious and laity. May they come to know that the wounds that come from their commitment to faith are never left unattended by our loving God.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for the leaders of nations that they will come to realise that all people have the right to safety and shelter and that all of us are responsible for the poor and displaced in this world.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for those who struggle in life and have lost sight of the end reward due to substance abuse, physical or emotional abuse from others, or neglect from those who should have nurtured them. May they find the courage to enter through the narrow door and know that through faith, they will be made strong again.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for our own community. May we not become complacent in our efforts, considering that we have done enough to achieve paradise, but always be ready to face further challenges that are placed on our journey to eternal life.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for those in our community who are grieving for loved ones who have died. May they be strengthened by the love of those around them and find peace.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for all Christians. May we continue to take the narrow road and know that the journey with Christ is our most important focus until we reach paradise.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

## Conclusion

In faith and love we know that these prayers, and the prayers unspoken in our hearts, will be answered through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, the Christ.

**Amen.**

## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	GA	CWB	CWBII	S&S1
Alleluia, sing to Jesus	191			371	619	449	
As we gather at your table						<b>451</b>	
Church of God				480	652	471	
Christ is made the sure foundation				482	640		
Come, my way, my truth, my life					656		
Gather your people, O Lord	71			530		490	
Gather us in					684	501	
In Christ there is no east or west					721	519	
Let all the peoples		56		60	599	532	
One bread, one body	129			193		579	
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow	10			384	788	448	
Seek ye first the kingdom of God	48			456		594	160
Table of plenty		20					
Tell out, my soul				213		550	
The table of God			8				

## Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

**Psalm 116: *Go out to all the world and tell the Good News/Alleluia!***

	CWB	GA	JOBC	JOBF	LPC	PM
Psalm 116	375		pg. 69		pg. 106	

## Music selections by Michael Mangan

**I Am the way (SHOF) *Based on Jn 14: 6-14* [Gathering, Gifts]**

**You are the way (TWB) *Based on Jn 14: 6-14* [Gifts]**