

2019.08.25 Homily by Fr. Gabor

The entire conversation between Jesus and an unknown person in the Gospel reading is set in the context of Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem. Luke the evangelist mentions this seemingly insignificant fact, but when he refers to it he is referring to His journey towards His sacrifice on the cross, and this is a very important information in this Gospel reading; because he basically tells us that the destination and purpose of Jesus' whole life is to sacrifice himself for us out of His immense love in Jerusalem, and to gain for us our Salvation. Therefore everything that Jesus does on his way to Jerusalem, namely His whole life journey reaches its fullness and receives its full meaning in the greatest act a person can do for his friends; namely the sacrifice of His life for our salvation. This is also the purpose, the direction and the meaning of our Christian life, so to receive the gift of Salvation He calls us also to journey with Him towards the spiritual Jerusalem; He calls us to join Him in His acts of sacrifice in order to receive Salvation in its fullness. Basically Jesus saves us not without us, but with our joining Him.

So Jesus having in the back of His mind His upcoming sacrifice of love responds to the BIG question about who will be saved. Luke the evangelist tries to tell us that the answer to the question is this: 'those who join Jesus spiritually on His life journey towards Jerusalem, and show His sacrifice of love today and in every age by striving to love others and to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others just as Jesus did.

In the next section of the Gospel reading Jesus speaks to those who have been called to the journey towards Salvation in the first place, but did not respond to it properly. He says that although through winning our salvation we receive invitation into the Kingdom of God, salvation doesn't mean we have a right to enter into the Kingdom. Why? Because salvation is both a gift won and offered to us, and also a gift to be unpacked. The challenge is the unpacking of the gift of Salvation. Remember how some kids open their gifts under the Christmas tree, and when some are not very happy with it, they start crying or throw it away; or do you remember how many gifts have you put aside or passed on to someone else. Salvation sounds good and it is eventually the most precious gift from Jesus our Saviour, but when you unpack it, you may not receive what you expect. What does that mean? Salvation is both the entry through the narrow gate, ie. the entry through Jesus into the heavenly Jerusalem, the Kingdom of the Father, but it is also the actual WAY which leads to the Kingdom of God. Salvation as the WAY of Christ may not be what you want, because Christ's way is not meant to be comfortable. Comfortable Christianity is an illusion.

I am sure all of us are here, because we want to walk in Christ's way towards the narrow gate, and in order to know which way exactly leads there we try to listen to the Word of God, Christ; the Way, the Truth and the Life. We also receive strength and encouragement for the journey by eating together with Christ and by way of receiving Him through Holy Communion. But the point Jesus makes is that it is not enough just to be consumers of the Word of God

and the Body and Blood of Christ; we also have to progress towards the narrow gate, by putting into acts of love what we have received. What matters to Jesus is that you are making the effort .

All of us will end up at the narrow door, in front of Jesus on the Last Judgment day, as Jesus says in the Gospel reading, but He also says that not all of us who consumed the food for the journey will be allowed to enter the Kingdom of God. Why? Because not everyone who consume the Word of God and the Body and Blood of Christ used these gifts to turn them into sacrifices of love. Jesus calls some of those who ate and drank with Him and listened to His teaching as ‘workers of iniquity’, and the word ‘iniquity’ refers to immorality, vice, evil and deviation from Jesus’ way.

This fantastic Gospel reading puts our whole Christian life into perspective, reopens our spiritual eyes towards the ultimate purpose of our Christian life journey; it also warns those who stagnate or regress or divert away from Christ’s way, and encourages us to keep going and progressing towards Christ the narrow gate by sacrifices of love, instead of kidding ourselves that going to church is all what God wants from us.