

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (C) {Fr. Vincent Gluc}

Our Gospel today reminds me of that very famous question posed by born-again or non-denominational Christians when they engage us in conversation and say: "Are you saved." It's interesting how various Christian churches come up with different formulas on the question of salvation all somehow based on the Scripture.

Born-again Christians believe that once you accept Jesus as your personal savior you are instantly saved, it's a given...it's done. Jehovah Witnesses believe that, in the end, 144,000 will be saved, a number far below even their own Church membership. As Catholics we believe that Jesus redeemed us, paid the price of our sins and in the words of St. Paul "we are working toward salvation." In the end, salvation is not automatic and it's not just for 144,000 either. Salvation is possible for all because it's God's will, we just need to do our part.

It is important to notice that in our Gospel Jesus does not answer the question how many/few will be saved. The parable Jesus offers simply indicates that the door to the kingdom is narrow, in the sense that it's going to take work to get through, but it is open to all people who are willing to pick up their cross and follow Jesus.

It's clear in our first reading from the prophet Isaiah that all nations will proclaim God's glory. People are called to salvation from the north/south and the east/west. We just need to seize God's free gift of grace in baptism. As St. Paul tells us today we need to strengthen our drooping hands, our weak knees and make straight the path to God's kingdom.

Where are the weaknesses in our lives? Where do we tend to fall short of our goal as disciples of Jesus? Where do we tend to wander off the right path on our journey to the kingdom? Knowing ourselves, weaknesses and strengths, is the first step in doing something about it and getting back on track.

Very often we hear the phrase that it's not WHAT you know but WHO you know. Knowing someone is often helpful in life in finding a job or getting a break in life. However, for Jesus, that kind of familiarity is not enough for his kingdom. As we heard in today's Gospel, "We ate and drank with you," we heard you teach in our streets" was not enough. The master simply responded, I do not know you. We are required to live our baptism and allow it to change and transform us so that we can live our lives in union with Jesus.

In other words, our baptismal certificate is not our automatic admission ticket to heaven. Our baptism is a call for us to become like Jesus. As we receive the Lord in Communion at Mass, we are called to conform ourselves to his image and likeness and to reflect God's love in all that we do and say. When we come before the Lord at our moment of Judgement, Jesus needs to

see himself reflected in our lives. He will know us and he will recognize us if we have become like him. If we have molded ourselves according to another image, more like the world around us, then like the master in our parable today Jesus may not recognize us.

As Jesus shared our humanity, he calls us to share his divinity, with his grace, we are called to rise above our selfishness, our sinfulness, our human weakness and weak knees. We have the noble call to be more like God, his very image and likeness, a reflection of his love to our world. As we receive the Lord Jesus in communion today, let us pray that we might become more and more like him, who gave his life for us and calls us to give our lives in service to one another.