

Isaiah 66:18-21

Psalm 117:1, 2

Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Luke 13:22-30

## Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

### August 21, 2022



### REFLECTION

What response was that follower of Christ hoping for when asking Jesus who will be saved? Perhaps they were hoping for reassurance that they at least would reach the pearly gates. Christ's response contains a direct challenge to any complacency his disciples might have had. Instead of assurances of salvation, Christ admonishes his followers to strive to enter by the "narrow gate." It isn't enough, today's Gospel tells us, to have welcomed Jesus. We have acted on his invitation to join him.

Will we be like the passive latecomers, complaining outside the locked gate at the end of our lives? Or will we be like the active seekers who come streaming from the ends of the earth to take their place in the kingdom? If we want to find a home in Christ, we must also continuously seek him.



### ACTION

Today's Gospel challenges us to be less complacent about our spiritual lives. We lead such busy lives that it is easy to just go through the motions of religious practice without letting it transform us. Jesus warns us not to dawdle outside the gate! The stories of converts and seekers, both historical and contemporary, can help us gain a renewed appreciation for the richness of our faith. This week, consider how you can answer Christ's invitation to follow him through the narrow gate of discipleship. How can you bring a seeker's wonder and zeal to your prayer life and your acts of charity and service?

**Watch TED-Ed's animation and narration of Robert Frost's classic poem, "The Road Not Taken":**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGB\\_K\\_xlHdI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGB_K_xlHdI)



### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Whom do you relate to in today's Gospel—the latecomers or the seekers?
- ❖ Who do you think might be the "last" of our society who will become "first" in Christ's kingdom?





August 21, 2022

# TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## LECTIONARY #123C

Isaiah 66:18-21

Psalms 117:1, 2

Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Luke 13:22-30

## Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

### Leader's Context

In today's Gospel Jesus is asked how many people will be saved. Jesus, in his typical teaching style, tells a parable about a master who wakes and locks the gate, excluding some from coming in. This parable exemplifies the kingdom of God, which has a narrow gate that all must enter through. Interestingly, Jesus mentions that those who are strong enough will enter. Famously, the parable ends with the line that some of the last will be first and some of the first will be last. The text raises many questions. It appears sharing a meal with the master is not enough. Though many will enter, the path will be difficult because it requires self-denial and humility, virtues that must be practiced our entire lives.

**Q FOCUS:** *To enter the narrow gate, the Christian needs humility.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Two of the saints that the Church remembers this week are St. Bartholomew (August 24) and St. Monica (August 27). St. Bartholomew was one of Jesus' apostles, but we don't know much about his life. As an apostle of Jesus, we can assume that he shared the faith with others and faithfully served Christ. St. Monica is known for her steadfast faith, as she constantly and unceasingly prayed for the conversion of her son, Augustine, whom the Church also

recognizes as a saint and was a great theologian. Her faith led to strong faith in others.

### Church Teaching Connection

"True friendship with Jesus is expressed in the way of life: it is expressed with goodness of heart, with humility, meekness and mercy, love for justice and truth, a sincere and honest commitment to peace and reconciliation" (Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus Message, August 26, 2007).

## Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

### Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel

Luke 13:22-30

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from.' "And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know



where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers! And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out. And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

Someone came to Jesus and asked a seemingly reasonable question: Will many people be saved or only a few? Did you notice that Jesus doesn't even answer that question. Instead, Jesus says this: Many people will try to enter, but they won't be strong enough.

► **Do you know anyone who is strong? What does it mean to be strong?**

► **What does it mean to be “strong enough”?**

When it comes to our faith and living our eternal life in the kingdom of God, Jesus is calling us to go beyond thinking about the bare minimum. We might assume that going to church every Sunday will get us there, but it isn't enough. Think back to the Gospel—those who ate and drank with the master were still locked out. Maybe memorizing Bible verses will guarantee our spot? But again, we hear that those who recognized the patriarchs (men like Abraham whom they would have learned about from their sacred texts) didn't make the cut.

While going to church, receiving the sacraments, and studying Scripture are all good, important, and necessary parts of our Christian identity, they alone do not make our faith strong enough. The gate is

narrow for a reason. It is hard for people to get through. We won't be able to muscle, trick, or buy our way in. In reality, we are not entitled to anything. Ultimately, our salvation and welcome into the heavenly kingdom is a gift from God.

► **If these things, like going to Mass and reading the Bible, aren't enough, what do you think is the missing element? How might it be that these things aren't enough?**

Unfortunately, there are many people who may appear to be Christian (doing these things), but they haven't allowed their faith to really seep into all aspects of their life. They go through the motions, but don't believe. They have not fully accepted the gift Jesus is offering them in these actions.

Those left outside were surprised to see strangers seated at the master's table. Those from the north, south, east, and west were included, yet they were not. What is the difference? What hidden strength did they possess? It can be hard to see what this difference is to those who do not have true faith. The last line of the Gospel may show us the key—“some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

The mysterious strength that Jesus speaks of in this passage is humility. Humility does not mean that you love to be humiliated. Humility does not mean to hate yourself or think you are unworthy of love. True humility recognizes who we are, especially in relation to God and others. The word humble comes from the root word *humus*, which means “grounded” or “of the earth.” In that definition we realize that we did not make ourselves. We are made by God. We are creation, not creator. The way we live ought to reflect that identity.

Humbling ourselves to recognize that God made us, that God loves, and that God wills us to be with him should grow in us a spirit of humility and gratitude; the recognition that all is grace.

► **What might humility look like in the lives of young people? In your actions at school, at home, and at church?**

Who are strong? The humble. Why? Because they recognize to whom they belong. Humility is the building block of the virtues, which help us live holy lives. Humility will help us recognize the privilege



of going to mass on Sundays. It will help us recognize God's loving message to us in the Bible. Humility will help us not judge others but instead love and accompany them. Humility will help us to recognize Jesus in the marginalized and in ourselves.

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 10.*

**To enter the kingdom of God, one must enter through the narrow gate.**

**Humility is the key for the Christian to unlock the virtues.**

**Humility is not hating yourself but rather seeing one's self in the proper context, as a beloved child of God.**

## Act on the Word

### Finding God Together

*For this activity, you will need small objects, such as a golf ball, dice, or action figures and the like. These items should be different from what is normally in your space since the teens will be trying to find them.*

As discussed in the reflection, true humility involves a recognition of our dependence on God and on others. This cooperative game allows the teens to work together to accomplish a task, in a variation on the "Warmer/Colder" game in which the person who is "it" is directed to finding a hidden object by the rest of the group yelling "warmer" when the person is close to the object and "colder" when the person moves

away from it. Instead of "warmer" and "colder" the group will hum louder (when the person is "warmer") or more quietly (when the person is "colder"). They can choose to hum a hymn they all know or just random notes.

After explaining these directions to the teens, send whoever is "it" out of the room so that the group can hide one of the objects. Bring the "it" person back into the room and have the group begin to hum accordingly. Play several rounds.

After the game is finished, have a brief discussion with the young people about how it felt to work together to accomplish a task. Ask them how they can, in their daily actions, help one another and those they encounter find God. We all need help in building and maintaining a relationship with God.

## Closing Prayer

*O God, creator of all,  
the first and the last and all in between  
seek to deepen their relationship with you.*

*Help us to know and serve our Lord*

*Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity  
of the Holy Spirit,*

*God, for ever and ever.*

*Amen.*

## For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*