

Homily for the 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 24-25, 2019

Readings: Isaiah 66: 18-21; Hebrews 12: 5-7, 11-13; Luke 13: 22-30

Preacher: Gee Gee Micoli

Over the last few weeks, Luke has presented an arduous road that Jesus has set before us. The parable of the master of the house tells us that “many” will be excluded from the Kingdom of God. The master not only closes the door but he locks it! That is final!

The finality in this parable reminds me of the concept of “missing the boat,” which my husband Rick and I personally experienced. Misjudging our travel time, we arrived at the dock just as the gangplank had been raised and the engines were started. We stood on the dock, almost able to touch the railing as the boat drifted away. It was final and we missed a lovely dinner cruise with our friends due to lack of proper planning. We were disappointed and upset.

In our Gospel, not only were the “many” not allowed to enter and “recline at the table in the kingdom of God,” but Jesus called them “evildoers!” They are shocked and bewildered! The “many” followed Jesus and believed what he preached. How did they “miss the boat?”

In the Christian tradition, faith without action is empty. The adage, “actions speak louder than words,” says it best. Or, as St. Francis said, “Preach the Gospel always and if necessary, use words.” Did the “many” just listen and agree or did they take action based on the words of Jesus? Were they driven by the orthodoxy of their

Jewish heritage rather than justice, mercy and love? Maybe we believe that going to Mass and sharing the Eucharist where we “eat and drink with Jesus” is enough?

Today’s Gospel tells us that it most definitely isn’t! Jesus holds us to much higher standards. Two weeks ago, Luke quotes Jesus, “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.”

As we sit in our comfortable homes, remember that there are those who have no shelter from the elements. As we dine on sumptuous meals and go to bed satiated, remember those who go to bed hungry. As we shower, wash our clothes and dishes, we must remember those who don’t have clean water to drink. We say that this is all far away. No! There are individuals who go to bed hungry and cold right here in Rochester, which is the third poorest metropolitan city in the United States.

We’ve heard the adage, “They should just pull themselves up by the bootstraps.” If we buy that, we are wrong again. There are several books that delineate why they need us: *Tattoos on the Heart* by Gregory Boyle; *\$2.00 A Day, Living on Almost Nothing in America* by Kathryn J. Edin and H. Luke Shaefer; or *Ninety Feet Under* by John Stazzabosco, a man who lives here in Rochester. These books address the reality of the poor and why they can’t pull themselves up from their poverty by themselves. *They need us!!!*

When we familiarize ourselves with the plight of the poor, we are able to develop a loving and compassionate heart. Then, through prayer, God directs us. Our hearts become the good soil that God's Word falls upon. Our prayer and discernment will lead us to actions of mercy that produce an abundant harvest. Educating ourselves about the poverty surrounding us creates a desire to change things both for the poor—and for us. Then, the door will be opened and a place set for us at the table in the Kingdom of God.

Rick and I “missed the boat” and watched the faces of our friends drift away on the lake just because we hadn't gotten accurate information. In our Gospel, the “many” saw the faces of “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God” when they were cast out because they failed to act upon the Master's expectations.

Jesus is calling each of us and needs us to do His work here on earth. Once that door is closed, there is no second chance. Once that boat sails, there is no way to get on board. Don't be left out! Make a plan and act upon it. Godspeed to all.