

Fr. Romeo Evangelista's Homily
August 25, 2019
21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

A man died and went to the judgement, they told him, "Before you meet with God, I should tell you – we've looked over your life, and to be honest you really didn't do anything particularly good or bad. We're not really sure what to do with you. Can you tell us anything you did that can help us make a decision?"

The newly arrived soul thought for a moment and replied, "Yeah, once I was driving along and came upon a person who was being harassed by a group of thugs. So I pulled over, got out a bat, and went to the leader of the thugs. He was a big, muscular guy with a ring pierced through his lip. Well, I tore the ring out of his lip, and told him that he and his gang had better stop bothering this guy or they would have to deal with me!

Wow, that's impressive, "When did this happen?" "About three minutes ago".

I had a friend who loves to travel. I don't know how many countries he had visited already. Because he said this is what he really dreamt for his life. And he said, "At least when I die, I will have no regrets because I've got what I really desire. But my question for him is.....Is that what your heart really desires?"

In the time of Jesus, people were aiming for something farther than just going abroad. Their conversations revolved around "going to heaven" or "entering the kingdom". This is truly remarkable but not surprising, given the very religious atmosphere of the Jews. Today's Gospel illustrates another instance when people expressed their sincerity in knowing about God's ultimate plan for them.

But the problem with Jesus' contemporaries was that in their desire to know about heaven or salvation, they fell into the trap of misplaced or wrong curiosity. They were asking the wrong questions because they think they already know the answers God will give. So when

they asked Jesus – Lord, will only a few people be saved? They were actually saying: Are we the only ones who will be saved, the only ones who will get to heaven? In their hearts, that was the presupposition – only they will get to heaven!

Jesus showed remarkable divine wisdom when he shifted the question from “how many” (“Are we the ones?”) to how people can get to heaven. Jesus did not play along with the petty mentality of people’s pride and sectarianism. Heaven is a gift from God and it is not an exclusive club reserved only for members of a particular group. Heaven is an invitation and therefore, the right curiosity must lead one to the right question – how to get there.

How unfortunate that today many people are accusing one another of being in the wrong path. Some have their own claims to be the true church – all to the exclusion of other people. So many strong arguments and so many painful tirades have already been suffered by the world from people who claim to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and claim heaven only for themselves.

We forget the words of Jesus – it’s the narrow road that leads you to salvation! It is the road of love and service, the road of understanding and forgiveness, the road of prayer and commitment, it’s the road of sacrifice. When we celebrate the Eucharist, that road becomes so clear—we hear it in God’s word and see it in the Body of Christ which is sacrificed for all of us. It is Jesus’ road of total love.

As followers of Jesus, let us not fall into the trap of wrong curiosity. Let us not be trapped in the wrong questions. Let us start to discover the narrow road that can be learned from the words and examples of Jesus himself.