

**FATHER MARK SCHULTE**  
**HOMILY**  
**TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C)**  
**August 24, 2025**

**“The Narrow Gate”**

My brothers and sisters, in the Gospel Jesus is asked if it is only a few that will be saved. In our day and time if asked this question perhaps many Christians would say that most souls will be saved. Others would say that God will not condemn anyone. One's own salvation should be on the mind of every believer. It should be foremost in our thoughts. We know that God has called all people to believe in Jesus Christ and be taken to eternal life with Jesus in heaven (Jn 3:16, 2 Pt 3:9). We also know that there are those that even after hearing the call to faith will not follow it and thus condemn themselves for all eternity after death (Jn 3:36). We don't know the percentages of those who are saved and those who are not, only God knows this. But Jesus does give us some hints at the broad numbers. He gives us one such hint in today's Gospel in response to the question put to Him, "Will only a few be saved" (Lk 13:22-3, CCC 1036, 1696).

Jesus replied: "Try to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough". The Gospel of Matthew states Jesus' response this way: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is easy, that leads to destruction and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Mt 7:13-14). A more common way of saying the same thing is: "The road to hell is broad and many take it. The road to heaven is narrow and few take it".

And so it would appear that the response that Jesus gives indicates that more people go to hell than go to heaven. We might ask, "Why is this"? The answer to this is in His response as well. The "narrow" gate implies that it is more difficult to pass through and because it is more difficult, fewer people choose to go through the narrow gate that leads to eternal life in heaven. However, there is a big difference between attempting to do something that is difficult and something that is impossible. Jesus didn't say that it is impossible to go through the narrow gate He simply indicates that it is difficult. Jesus said that many will attempt, seek, or desire to go through the narrow gate but not be able to. Why is this? If salvation is a desirable goal, because it is more valuable than anything else, and is difficult to achieve, then simply making a half-hearted attempt will not be enough effort to achieve it. Most very valuable objectives require a lot of effort to acquire.

Too many people set their own personal standard as to what it takes to be saved, and all too often their standard falls way short of the standard that Jesus sets. For example Jesus said that we must "pray always" (Lk 18:1). Many Christians make a feeble attempt at a prayer life if they pray at all. Jesus said we must pick up our cross and follow Him, and he who does not pick up his cross cannot be His disciple (Mt 10:38, Lk 14:27). Salvation comes by way of the cross by accepting the suffering

that comes our way. For many Christians, the cross, the sufferings of this life, have no value and they attempt to avoid the cross at all costs. Jesus said that we must persevere in our spiritual efforts until the end, the end of our life (Mt 2:13). But many Christians start out strong, and then when things get difficult, they give up and go back to their former ways (Jn 6:66). Jesus said “I have come to fulfill the law, not abolish it” (Mt 5:17). Thus, the ten commandments are as valid today as they ever were, yet many Christians ignore the commandments, especially the first three, and fail to come to Mass and keep the Lord’s Day holy.

Jesus gave His Church His Seven Sacraments thus providing the grace needed to go through the narrow gate, but these priceless gifts from Jesus are often ignored as being inconsequential and unnecessary, especially the sacrament of His Body and Blood, the Holy Eucharist, of which He said “Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you”, thus making receiving His body and blood necessary for salvation (Jn 6:53-58, CCC 994, 1524).

Too many Christians think that all they have to do to be saved is accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior and then proceed to ignore Him throughout the rest of their lives.

Too many Christians by establishing their own standards for salvation have chosen the wide gate, the easy way that leads to a very warm place. They are those left standing outside the door at judgement. Others said, “Lord we ate and drank with You, open for us”. These could be those Catholics who ate and drank from the Eucharist unworthily, and Jesus said “depart from me. I did not know you” (1 Cor 11:27-30).

My brothers and sisters, let us renew our commitment to pass through the narrow gate that Jesus has established, the way of the cross, the way of the sacraments, the way of the commandments, the way of the Church’s traditions that are there to help us, the way of prayer, the virtues, the beatitudes, and above all charity (CCC 78, 174, 688). This is the narrow way. These are the sure ways to eternal life. They are the ways of a commitment to God.

NOTE: CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church