

21ST SUNDAY ORD. (C)
“I’M COMING TO GATHER ALL NATIONS AND TONGUES”, SAYS THE LORD

The desire of God is that all nations will come to Him to see His glory. This has been His wish since creation, and it was revealed to the prophet Isaiah. God would send fugitives to the nations and they would proclaim His glory among the nations. God was going to end Israel’s exile, and both Israel and Gentile converts would come to the Temple bearing gifts.

The coming of Jesus into the world is to ‘gather the nations into the peace of God’s kingdom’. Apart from saving us from sin and death, He also came to break the barriers that separated the Jews from the Gentiles. That was why before He ascended into heaven, He commissioned His disciples to preach to all nations. He said to them: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you,” (Mt.28:18b-20a).

The message of salvation is sent to all nations, but those who will respond positively and discipline themselves will be saved. That was why when the young man asked Jesus whether only a few people would be saved, He told him to ‘strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many will attempt to enter but will not be able.’

It is not enough to eat and drink with the Lord, nor to hear His teachings. It is to do the will of God. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ Then I shall declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evil doers,” (Mt.7:21-23).

God is calling us to the kingdom but we have to pass through the narrow door. His Son is the way to Him. We are to follow Him by enduring our

trials as a way of being disciplined. Jesus told His disciples at another time; "Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it," (Mt.7:13-14). This should remind us of the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan. They were tested in many ways - feeling hungry and thirsty, and had to fight the enemies who tried to prevent them from passing through their territories. Many died on the way because they could not stand the challenges.

There are ups and downs in our lives but that does not mean God is angry with us. He allows certain things to happen in our lives which may be unpleasant but if we bear them with patient endurance it will bear good fruit. In coping with our problems, we learn the value of discipline and purification. Fire does not harm gold, but purifies it; in the same way the trials are to purify us and make our faith strong to be able to strive to enter by the narrow gate.

We all have been invited to see the glory of God, and to bring Him our offering. We come every day to listen to Him and we dine with Him. Does Jesus recognize us as worthy servants fit to be opened? Are we going to be among those who will come from the east and west to take their seats at table in the kingdom? Today's liturgy should remind us to take our spiritual life seriously and not to take things for granted. It is time we reexamine ourselves how we are living our lives as Christians.