Homily for the 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time(8/25/2019)

Rev. Francis Kim

Four mothers are having lunch.

Mother 1: My son is a priest. When he enters the church, everyone says, Good morning Father (And, she is very proud).

Mother 2: My son is a bishop; everyone says, Good morning Your Excellency (And, she is very very proud).

Mother 3: My son is a cardinal; everyone says, Good morning Your Eminence. (And, she is extremely proud).

All 3 mothers look at Mother 4 and see what she has to say.

Mother 4: Oh, my son is not a priest. He is just a layman. And, he is 350 pounds & 7 foot 6. And when he enters the church, everyone says, OH MY GOD!!!

We hear in today’s Gospel someone’s asking, “Will only a few people be saved?” That is a good question. Then, how many will be saved? 100 million? A billion? Jesus says, “Many will try to enter the Kingdom of heaven but will be unable.” Then, who will be saved, and who will not? Who will be the first, and who will be the last?

Jesus doesn’t give a precise answer. He says that the gate is wide open with completely free entry into the Kingdom. The gate, however, is narrow. So, rather than our trying to figure how many will fit through, we should make sure that we ourselves will fit through.

It is always tempting to be so concerned and even outraged about the state of morality around us that we pay little attention to the state of our soul and our life.

When we are critical of the scandals about which we read and how many people are failing to enter the door to heaven, we should make sure that we are entering through the door ourselves. Remember, the door is narrow, that means it takes effort to get in. We have to get rid of a great deal of baggage to enter, baggage like hatred, greed, jealousy, lust, apathy, and a great deal of personal burden that weighs us down. Can we really fit through?

The door is a perfectly normal-sized door. It is narrow only for those with too much baggage to get through.

I saw a Charlie Brown cartoon that showed him going skiing. He put on his bulky clothes; his fur hat, large shoes, and heavy gloves. He then strapped in his snowshoes across his front and crisscrossed his skies and poles across his back. Then, he hung his camera and first-aid kit over his coat.

Finally, he was all ready… the only problem was, with all that stuff on him, he couldn’t get through the door. It was funny. That’s the meaning of the narrow door.

Sometimes, we have so many possessions, so many toys, and so many sins, all of which can prevent us from entering heaven through the narrow door. So, we had better repent and get rid of all this stuff. Many are lost because they do not fit through the narrow gate.

Some people may say that they went to a Catholic school, sang in the choir, said many prayers every day, but the question is whether their lives were changed by all that.

We have to change our lives turning away from sins and follow God’s Word. If not, the Lord will say, “I do not know where you are from.”

Salvation is not a matter of hearing God’s Word but following it. Through following that Word, we will fit through the door that, although narrow, is the gate to the wide open spaces of God’s life forever.

Today’s Gospel about the narrow gate carries some searching challenges for each of us. Rather that considering how many will enter the gate of the Kingdom, are we entering through the gate? Are we becoming fit for entry by our spiritual life?

Jesus says, “Try to come in through the narrow door. Many will try to enter but will not be able.”

By keeping our faith, holding true to our beliefs, enjoying the sacraments, following the teaching of the Church, we hope to enter through the narrow gate.

There is only one Gospel, one Christ, one cross, and one door. No one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ. Jesus says to us, “I am the gate; if any one enters by me, he will be saved.”

Jesus opens the door for us to enter into the Kingdom of God. He is our gate!