

Not everything counts (Entering by the narrow door)

Jesus goes walking toward Jerusalem. His journey isn't that of a pilgrim who goes up to the Temple to fulfil his religious obligations. According to Luke, Jesus goes around the cities and villages «teaching». There's something he needs to communicate to those people: God is a good Father who offers salvation to everyone. All are invited to receive God's forgiveness.

His message surprises everyone. Sinners are filled with joy to hear him speak of God's unfathomable goodness: even they can hope for salvation. In the Pharisee camp, however, they criticize his message and also his welcoming of tax-collectors, prostitutes and sinners: isn't Jesus opening up a road to the watering-down of religion and to unacceptable morals?

According to Luke, someone from the crowd interrupts Jesus, to ask him about how many people will be saved, in the end. Will they be few? many? everyone? only the just? Jesus doesn't answer his question directly. What's important isn't knowing exactly how many will be saved. What's decisive is living with a clear and responsible attitude in order to welcome salvation from that Good God. Jesus reminds them all: «*Try your hardest to enter by the narrow door*».

In this way Jesus undercuts the reaction of those who understand his message as an invitation to laxity. That makes fun of the Father. Salvation isn't something one receives irresponsibly from a permissive God. It also isn't the privilege of an elect few. It's not enough to be children of Abraham. It isn't sufficient to have known the Messiah.

In order to welcome God's salvation, it's necessary to try our hardest, to keep struggling, to imitate the Father, to trust in God's forgiveness. Jesus doesn't lower his demands: «*Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate*»; «*Don't judge and you will not be judged*»; «*Forgive seventy times seven*» as does your Father; «*Seek God's Reign and God's justice*».

In order to correctly understand the invitation to «enter by the narrow door» we need to remember Jesus' words that we read in John's Gospel: «*I am the door; the one who enters through me, will be saved*» (John 10,9). Entering by the narrow door is «following Jesus»; learning to live as he did; taking up his cross and trusting the Father who has raised him from the dead.

In this following of Jesus, not everything counts, not everything is equal; we need to respond to the Father's love faithfully. What Jesus asks isn't legalistic rigourism, but a radical love for God and neighbour. That's why his call is a source of demand, but not of anxiety. Jesus Christ is a door that is always open. No one can close it, only ourselves if we close ourselves to his forgiveness. (José Antonio Pagola)