

Strive to Enter Through the Narrow Gate

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

We've all heard it before, someone at a parish meeting or school board gathering says, "Well, I've been here for years, and I know what's best." Maybe they truly want to help. But too often, beneath the words lies a subtle assumption: I know better. I deserve to be heard. My vision is more faithful than yours. This attitude, though cloaked in devotion, brushes up against the danger Jesus warns us about in today's Gospel.

In Luke 13:22-30, Jesus speaks plainly and urgently: "Strive to enter through the narrow gate." Salvation, he tells us, isn't automatic. It's not about checking boxes or having the right credentials. It's about striving—a word that implies effort, humility, and even struggle. The narrow gate is not a physical door but the path of conversion, sacrifice, and surrender to God's will.

Some listeners of Jesus assumed they were already *in members* of the chosen people, faithful in practice, even familiar with his teaching. Yet Jesus cautions: "I do not know where you are from." He's speaking to those who believed their proximity to religion guaranteed entry into heaven, even as their hearts remained closed. It's a wake-up call to all who assume that being "religious" is the same as being transformed by Christ.

Pope Francis speaks directly to this temptation: "Do we prefer the easy way of thinking only about ourselves, or do we choose the narrow door of the gospel that puts our selfishness into crisis?" The narrow gate calls us not only to believe but to be changed. And that often means confronting our pride and surrendering our grip on being "right."

In parish life, this Gospel is especially poignant. We may love our parish deeply, give generously, and volunteer tirelessly. But if our service becomes a platform for judgment, control, or resentment, then we risk closing our hearts to the very grace we think we embody. Salvation is not a reward for being the loudest or most established voice. It is a gift for the humble, for those who continually repent, forgive, and serve.

St. Augustine offers us a guiding light: "Hold all these other things cheap and make your way to him. . . Let him be your hope." This means letting go of ego, comparison, and entitlement. It means realizing that Christ's Church is not built on our preferences but on our participation in his mercy and truth.

Jesus reminds us that "some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." It is not our place to rank ourselves or others. Our task is to strive—to keep seeking the narrow way with faith, love, and humility. In the end, it's not about proving we were right but about whether we truly followed Christ, whose door is narrow not to exclude but to form us into saints.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy