**21st Sunday, Ordinary Time, Cycle. C. 2019**

There is a “**Peanuts Carto**on” that shows Charlie Brown getting up one morning and looking out the window. It is a lovely winter day. Snow covers the ground. It is very cold, but perfect for skiing. So Charlie bundles up with several layers of clothes. Then he puts on his big gloves and skis. When he moves towards the door, he discovers that he is so bundled up that he cannot get through the door. **So he stands up there, screaming at the top of his lungs.**

**The image of Charlie Brown standing in front of the door too bundled up to pass through**, it is a good image of many of us today. We want to follow Jesus, but we are so bundled up in material possessions and concerns that we cannot get through the door. So, like Charlie, we end up standing in front of the door and screaming. The door to the Kingdom of God is narrow only for those who are too **“bundled up**”.

**In the Gospel today**, there comes a man who asked, ***Sir, will only a few be saved”?*** Jesus did not answer the question directly. He never does. He only said, “***The gate is open, but it is narrow. Everyone should be able to pass, nobody should be left behind”.*** According to some Biblical scholars, one of the gates leading into Jerusalem was so narrow that a big, richly loaded camel could not pass though that gate. So the gate was nicknamed the “**needle’s ey**e”, just as we now call some roads **“bottleneck**s”.

Then the man wanted to ask, “***How many will you let through? How many will your kingdom of heaven immigration officers stop? Who will get a visa, a passport, a green card, a permanent resident car, a social security number?”*** Jesus’ answer was, “The gate is open”, Free entry! No formalities. No security check up and no guards. But remember, the gate is narrow and the path leading to it also is narrow. The **narrowness of the road- planned and desig**ned by God himself- is the **highest secur**ity, more than the border security of any country; It’s like working on the computer filling up an application….

During the Second World War, it is said that families would be warned: “get out, disappear. You cannot take much. Be ready to leave tomorrow”. Some were not ready. They had not been able to make up their minds about what to take and what to leave. The army forcefully took them away, and they perished.

Jesus makes it clear that **“He is the narrow gat**e”, the only way of salvation, the path by which all must travel to enter the kingdom of the Father.(Jn: 14:6). Many however, will lose their place at the Heavenly table, **Jesus warns**. Refusing to accept his narrow way, they will weaken, render themselves unknown to the Father. We don’t want to be numbered among those drooping hands and weak knees, so we must strive for that narrow gate, a way of hardship and suffering- **the way of the beloved Son.**

So let us not make material things our worry and burden. Let us **live simply and soberly, generously and carefully**. Let us live **just and chaste, humble and uncomp**licated. Let us live caring for the only thing that will pass with us through the narrow door. That is what Jesus did on his way to Jerusalem, walking the narrow road to that gate of His cross and the life and glory to follow.

Once a young man to embrace religious life entered a monastery where the vow of silence limited all speaking to two words every ten years. After this young novice completed his first decade the **Abbot asked hi**m: “***what are the two words you would like to spea***k?. The monk replied: “**Bed.., hard**”, and the Abbot said, **“I see**”. Ten years later, the monk returned to the Abbots’ office and was again asked the same question: “***what are the two words you would like to speak***? **“Food….stinks**”, said the monk. **“I see**”, replied the Abbot. Yet another ten years passed, and once again the Abbot asked the monk the same question: “***what are your two words now***? “I ……quit” said the monk. ***Well, I can see why***”, replied the Abbot. “***All you ever do is comp***lain”.

This monk had spent 30 years in the monastery, immersed in the scriptures, listening and studying Jesus’ teaching, attending liturgies and most importantly receiving the Eucharist-eating and drinking Jesus’ body and blood- and yet somehow still missing the point of it all. His interest were not in things associated with the Kingdom that Jesus speaks about, but rather in those **temporal things that mattered to h**im. By placing his needs first, he failed to see the value of the discipline that letter to the Hebrews (**Second Reading**) suggests will bring the peaceful fruit of the righteousness to those who are trained by it.

In a moment we, like the monk in the story, will eat of Christ’s body and drink his blood. Let our **“Amen**” in receiving him indicate not just that we believe in who he is, **but that we are committed to building our relationship with him**, such that we never hear the words from him. ***“Depart from me…. I do not know where you are from”.*** A relationship built here on earth will allow us to recline with him at table in the kingdom of God for all eternity.