

## **Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**August 24, 2025**

**A sign is given.**

**In trials, be disciplined.**

**The gate is narrow.**

**-rvb**

**Reading 1**

**Isaiah 66:18-21**

**Thus says the LORD:**

**I know their works and their thoughts,  
and I come to gather nations of every language;  
they shall come and see my glory.**

**I will set a sign among them;  
from them I will send fugitives to the nations:  
to Tarshish, Put and Lud, Mosoch, Tubal and Javan,  
to the distant coastlands  
that have never heard of my fame, or seen my glory;  
and they shall proclaim my glory among the nations.  
They shall bring all your brothers and sisters from all the nations  
as an offering to the LORD,  
on horses and in chariots, in carts, upon mules and dromedaries,  
to Jerusalem, my holy mountain, says the LORD,  
just as the Israelites bring their offering  
to the house of the LORD in clean vessels.  
Some of these I will take as priests and Levites, says the LORD.**

**A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

**Today's scriptures offer various and sundry guidelines for living a life  
worthy of entering through the narrow gate: Isaiah emphasizes the**

importance of openness, universalism, ecumenism, and reconciliation – “I come to gather nations of every language; they shall come and see my glory;” God wishes salvation for everyone. Hebrews exalts the purifying qualities of suffering and pain as part of the human condition. Suffering and pain are like manure, stinky but necessary for growth. In the Gospel, Jesus maintains there are a few conditions if we want to be saved. Do we know what they are?

The [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) was signed by the UN General Assembly at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, France on December 10th 1948. The declaration was eventually adopted with 48 votes for and none against (8 abstained and two did not vote).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a defining document in history that outlines 30 articles affirming individual rights. These include such factors as life, education and freedom from discrimination among many other important freedoms and rights everyone deserves to enjoy without interference or fear for their safety or life.

The following is the entire list of 30 human rights according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations, signed in Paris on 10 December 1948: Today, in the hallways of politicians some of these rights are being challenged, threatened, and presently some ignored as the rule of law and cast aside in a lawless fashion. Which ones are you concerned about? It is time for another Isaiah to rise from the ashes

of the potential demise of our Democracy to set hearts on fire and proclaim – which of these rights are being threatened and dismantled? **I know their works and their thoughts, and I come to gather nations of every language; they shall come and see my glory.**

1. All human beings are free and equal
2. No discrimination
3. Right to life
4. No slavery
5. No torture and inhuman treatment
6. Same right to use law
7. Equal before the law
8. Right to be treated fair by the court
9. No unfair detainment
10. Right to trial
11. Innocent until proved guilty
12. Right to privacy
13. Freedom to movement and residence
14. Right to asylum
15. Right to nationality
16. Rights to marry and have family
17. Right to own things
18. Freedom of thought and religion.
19. Freedom of opinion and expression

- 20. Right to assemble
- 21. Right to democracy
- 22. Right to social security
- 23. Right to work
- 24. Right to rest and holiday
- 25. Right of social service
- 26. Right to education
- 27. Right of culture and art
- 28. Freedom around the world
- 29. Subject to law
- 30. Human rights can't be taken away

### **Get Involved in Human Rights**

We read the final words of First Lady, Elenor Roosevelt: The rights enumerated in the declaration were controversial among the U.N.'s member nations and remain so today. It proclaimed, among other rights, that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services." The former First Lady fought hard to make the declaration comprehensive and later wrote that she considered it ["my most important task"](#) during her years at the U.N.

### **Responsorial Psalm**

[Psalm 117:1, 2](#)

**R. (Mk 16:15) Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.**

**or:**

**R. Alleluia.**

**Praise the LORD, all you nations;**

**glorify him, all you peoples!**

**R. Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.**

## **Reading 2**

### **Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13**

**Brothers and sisters,**

**You have forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as children:**

**"My son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord**

**or lose heart when reproved by him;**

**for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines;**

**he scourges every son he acknowledges."**

**Endure your trials as "discipline";**

**God treats you as sons.**

**For what "son" is there whom his father does not discipline?**

**At the time,**

**all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain,**

**yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness**

**to those who are trained by it.**

**So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees.**

**Make straight paths for your feet,**

**that what is lame may not be disjoined but healed.**

## **A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

**In this reading from Hebrews, the author focuses on God disciplining and testing us via struggles, pain, and suffering as a cleansing and purifying process in our lives. It can prepare and strengthen us for the journey to our heavenly home while fortifying our present encounters with the**

temptations of the moment. Discipline, the narrow gate, leads to joy, peace and justice. The hard knocks of life can trip us up and cause us to stumble and falter. The tough love of God, our loving Father, will encircle us as we pass through suffering, pain, passion, and sorrow.

In Verses 11-13- it reads, “So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, that what is lame may not be disjointed but healed.” This passage was read and lived by a young athlete, Eric Liddell, who was portrayed in the movie Chariots of Fire. Eric said, “The bravest moment of a person’s life in the moment when he looks at himself objectively without wincing, without complaining.” This is the moment of truth when we stand naked in God’s loving presence as Jesus did when he uttered his prayer of passion in Gethsemane – “Father, all things are possible to you; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what you will.” At the nailing on the cross, Jesus uttered, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Jon Sobrino, S.J. wrote: “The cross is the most popular and distinctive feature of Christian faith, but Christian spirituality is not formally a spirituality of suffering; rather it is a spirituality focused on the following of Jesus.”

Alleluia

[John 14:6](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the way, the truth and the life, says the Lord;  
no one comes to the Father, except through me.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

[Luke 13:22-30](#)

Jesus passed through towns and villages,  
teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem.

Someone asked him,

"Lord, will only a few people be saved?"

He answered them,

"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, (door)

for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter

but will not be strong enough.

After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door,  
then will you stand outside knocking and saying,

'Lord, open the door for us.'

He will say to you in reply,

'I do not know where you are from.

And you will say,

'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.'

Then he will say to you,

'I do not know where you are from.

Depart from me, all you evildoers!'

And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth

when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

and all the prophets in the kingdom of God

and you yourselves cast out.

And people will come from the east and the west

and from the north and the south

and will recline at table in the kingdom of God.

For behold, some are last who will be first,

and some are first who will be last."

## **A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

Jean Paul Sartre, a French existentialist, wrote that life is like a huge hall filled with people. The hall is on fire, but it has no exits (the title of his book, No Exit), no doors(gates) leading out. The people are trapped, and they know it. He also commented that life itself is a “filthy hope.” Contrary to this, Jesus said, “I am the door: if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9); and also in today’s gospel: **“Strive to enter through the narrow gate (door); for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough.”** Jesus used language and illustrations that were understood by the people of His day. To understand what he meant by “door” or “gate” we need to remember that in those days the shepherd would gather his sheep at night into open-air sheepfolds for protection. These sheepfolds were enclosed by a wall with thorns on top to keep out prowling wolves. The shepherd would station himself at the narrow door and call the sheep to come in. It is also interesting to note during the Middle Ages a carpenter’s guild used these words of Christ, “I am the door” as their trademark. They sectioned off each



door into four vertical rectangles leaving the relief of a cross in the middle of the door. To this day many of our doors bear the relief of the cross in the middle. They remind us that Jesus is the real door. Thus, upon entering another room we might momentarily remind ourselves that Jesus is the real door through which we are entering. It is also said by some that the “iconostasion” in the Orthodox Church is (a partition separating the altar or Holy of Holies from the Nave) represents the curtain in the Old Testament temple. The large door in the middle of the “iconostasion” is called the Royal Door, representing the opening in the curtain which was made by Christ. It reminds the worshipper that Christ is the door to God’s presence. -Fr. George Maloney, Orthodox priest I had as an instructor at Fordham in 1978.

Jesus proclaims in today’s Gospel, “Try to come through the narrow door.” It is not easy; it takes spiritual discipline. Jesus seeks to heal, liberate, and free us from our past. Life is not a doorless hall on fire. It is not filthy hope. The room has an entrance and exit – a door or gate. The door is Christ who says, “Life is joyful hope.” Jesus extends to everyone a hopeful passage to a fuller and more complete life – the Reign of God. Jesus is inching his way to Jerusalem; the kingdom has been inaugurated.

**Someone asked him,**

**"Lord, will only a few people be saved?"**

**Jesus is more concerned not about whom but about how to enter this grace-filled time known as the Reign or Kingdom of God. If only a few could enter, then Sartre was right, "Life would be a filthy hope." For Jesus is the narrow gate because entry does demand personal faith, fidelity, and accountability. The door is narrow for those who are burdened with the luggage of religious fanaticism, fervor, legalism – the moralists of Jesus' time who loved to split hairs. They were legalists, self-righteous, and cast aspersions on the poor; today, immigrants would be the object of their righteous wrath. Jesus is the narrow door or gate who opens his arms to those who manifest a deep sense of faith, repentance, and in our day who are patriotic, dedicated, committed, have a solid work ethic, and seek a better life for themselves and their families.**

**And people (Immigrants) will come from the east and the west**

**and from the north and the south**

**and will recline at table in the kingdom of God.**

**For behold, some are last who will be first,**

**and some are first who will be last.”**

**Final Prayer:** God of endless promises. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Whoever knocks, the door shall be opened. May the gentle presence of your Spirit guide us through the door or gate of life who is Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Roger J. Vanden Busch**