

21st Sunday of Ordinary Time

Isaiah 66:18-21
(Mark 16:15) Ps 117:1,2
Hebrews 12:5-7,11-13
Luke 13:22-30

Monday August 22
Queenship of Virgin Mary
2 Thessalonians 1:1-5,11-12
Ps 96:1-2a,2b-3,4-5
Matthew 23:13-22

Tuesday August 23
2 Thes 2:1-3a,14-17
Ps 96:10-13
Matthew 23:23-26

Wednesday August 24
St. Bartholomew
Revelation 21:9b-14
Ps 145:10-13,17-18
John 1:45-51

Thursday August 25
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
Ps 145:2-7
Matthew 24:42-51

Friday August 26
1 Corinthians 1:17-25
Ps 33:1-2,4-5,10-11
Matthew 25:1-13

Saturday August 27
St. Monica
1 Corinthians 1:26-31
Ps 33:12-13,18-21
Matthew 25:14-30

This Sunday's scripture readings are signposts on the road to the narrow gate into heaven. Isaiah says that God knows our works and our thoughts. To help us sanctify our works and purify our thoughts, so that we can see the fullness of the glory of God when we die, he sets a sign among us. It is Jesus. His life – how he lived and how he died – are a sign of how to enter heaven.

He says in the Gospel reading that many will attempt to enter salvation who are not strong enough. Strong enough for what?

Throughout the Gospel, Jesus gives us the answer to that: We must be perfect in love. That does not mean that mistakes and other imperfections will lock us out of heaven. The key that opens the gate to heaven is love, and if we throw love away, we throw that key away.



it, we have to get rid of anything that blocks his love: ungiven-ness, vengeful attitudes, lingering resentments and cynicism, and the apathetic ignoring of the needs of others.

The reading from Hebrews tells us not to disdain the discipline of the Lord. No matter what causes our hardships and trials or who's to blame, God uses them to perfect us in love. If we recognize these as opportunities to grow in love – if we seek God in them and let him stretch our ability to love – we become more like Jesus. We make the path toward heaven straight, and what is lame and disjointed in our spirituality is healed.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. Who in your life is difficult to love? (Don't forget to consider the unloving behaviors you have toward yourself.)
2. How might God be using these hard-to-love people to strengthen your ability to love more perfectly?
3. People who are difficult to love are saint-makers, because they give us opportunities to identify and overcome (with God's help of course) the imperfections in our ability to love. What happens if we give God permission to change us when we wish someone else would change? How is this a key to heaven?

It's very unlikely, however, that we will ever completely throw love away, even though we sin. But how can we be perfect in love? Perfect love means we love fully. Always. Unconditionally. Sacrificially. Radically.

To be perfect in love, we need to have the Lord's own love. We need Jesus to dwell in us and reach others through us. On our own, we cannot love fully, but when we rely on God to give us his love for others, we have perfect love. To rely on God's love and feel confident in