

## Tuesday - Ordinary Time 12-B

John Paul II Pastoral Centre

26 June 2018

Dear brothers in the priesthood, deacons, colleagues and friends in Christ:

### *Introduction*

One of my favourite hymns sums up the particular sentiments that draw us together this evening; that is, to give thanks to the Lord for the great gift that, for 30 years, Dan Moric has been for the life of the Church in the Archdiocese of Vancouver, most especially in the sphere of Catholic education. He has truly been one of the gifts that God has sent to us to enrich our community of faith.

But let me recite – for I dare not attempt the marvellous setting of Gustav Hölst in “The Planets” – the opening words of the first stanza:

O God beyond all praising,  
We worship you today  
And sing the love amazing  
That songs cannot repay;  
For we can only wonder  
At every gift you send,  
At blessings without number  
And mercies without end.

Dan, we thank you for being a gift of God and blessing sent to us. More will be said about all this at the dinner, but it is more than fitting

that we, as a Catholic community, celebrate the gift of a member, all the while praising God for making such a gift possible by his merciful grace.

### ***Gospel***

Today's Gospel is about the cost of taking the road of discipleship. Jesus does not try to entice us to take this journey with him by telling us that it will be easy, or even that many will join us along the way.

He provides us with a visual aid that makes this cost easy to understand. He places us before a long, high wall, rather like one surrounding a fortress or a medieval city. And there are two points of entry. These two gates open to very different sections of the city.

There is a gate which appears to be the main one. It is high and wide, making it accessible to all traffic. The road leading to it is broad and comfortable, no doubt lined with food trucks and other entertainment. Movement is easy – and since this could be Vancouver, there's even a bicycle path. Heavy foot traffic advances to this gate without any problem. In fact, the walkers are almost carried along by the enthusiasm of the crowd.

There's only one problem. Once through the gate, a high toll is exacted. And the part of the city entered by the throng is barren. This road, as Scripture records, leads to destruction (cf. Mt 7:13). It is the road that carries us away from our true destiny.

The other road, which approaches the city through a narrow gate,

is itself constricted. Real effort is required to move along and eventually to squeeze through the gate. There's no room for extra baggage, even the baggage of past sins which have been forgiven yet weigh us down. This path is for the focussed and the agile. And it leads through the narrow gate, but to life (cf. Mt 7:14). The only sad thing is that few appear to be on this path.<sup>1</sup>

In this brief instruction, Jesus is directing his disciples' attention – and so ours as well – to the final outcome of the path we have chosen for our journey through life. We decide either to follow God's way or we follow our own way. And there is a great difference between the two.

Jesus is urging us to be among those who squeeze through the gate that leads to eternal life. And on that road, he wants to be our Companion. He is walking ahead of us, and with us, so that we do not lose our way. That's why "we must keep our eyes on him for he is the gate and the way."<sup>2</sup>

Despite his seriousness, the Lord does not mean to frighten us, but to warn us of our responsibility to respond to his invitation to follow him, a following that takes us to the Cross before the Resurrection.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 118-119.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 90.

The “narrowness” of the path and gateway to eternal life can seem harsh. And there’s no doubt this text has often been used merely in a threatening way, to scare us into obeying the Commandments.

But, as always, we read the Gospel message as a whole. No single text tells the whole story. Remember, therefore, other words of the Lord: “Come to me all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens” (Mt 11:28). Or the Lord’s care for the lilies of the field. Or St. Paul’s letter to Timothy, reminding us that “God wills all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth” (1 Tim 2:16).

The greatest truth of all is that grace abounds even more than sin, and that God’s mercy outstrips all human estimates about how far it can go, for his mercy is boundless and without end.

### ***Conclusion***

Let us now continue our celebration with thanksgiving and joyful hearts, because we believe that the One who loves us is coming to us in this Eucharist, leading us on his road that opens to the fullness of eternal life.

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