

XXI SUNDAY IS. 66: 18-21, HEBREWS. 12: 5-7, 11-13; LUKE 13: 22-30 (AUG. 26)

Three surprises in heaven: Bishop Sheen tells us that we will have three surprises in heaven. The first surprise: We will be surprised to see that many people we expected to be in Heaven are not there. St. John of the Cross gives the reason why they are not there: "At the evening of our life, we shall be judged on how we have loved." The second surprise: We will be surprised to see that the people we never expected to be in Heaven are there. It is because God judges man's intentions and rewards them accordingly. The third surprise: We will be surprised to see that we are in Heaven. Since our getting to Heaven is principally God's work we should be surprised that God somehow "went out of His way" to save us simply because we showed the good will and generosity to cooperate with His grace. In today's Gospel, Jesus answers the question who will be saved, when and how.

As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem, Jesus answered the question of how many would be saved by answering four presumed questions: Who will be saved? How? Why? When? What a direct, difficult question! And Jesus gave a direct, challenging answer: "Many...will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough". It is something we have to work for it. St. Augustine said that God created us without our help but he will not save us without our help.

In the first reading, addressing the returning Babylonian exiles, the prophet Isaiah corrected his audience by telling them that salvation was not a Jewish monopoly, and that was why Yahweh also welcomed the pagans into Judaism. The prophet's great book ends as it began, with a vision of all the peoples of the world streaming toward Jerusalem, acknowledging and praising the God of Israel. In the second reading, exploring with his readers the consequences of Christian commitment, St. Paul explained "the narrow gate" of Jesus as pain and suffering resulting from God's loving discipline of His children. The responsorial psalm, "*Go out to all the world and tell the Good News,*" reflects the mission of God's chosen people to be instruments of salvation to the whole world.

The question is whether we have put Jesus first in our lives and are taking the time to let him minister to us every day. St. Paul writes in Romans 10:9:

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”. The creed that we recite every Sunday at Mass is our statement of faith. So we can trust that salvation is ours as we “confess” this creed and as we place our faith and trust in the truths that this creed announces. Let this be our personal confession of faith; we need to ask the Holy Spirit to open our hearts to these truths everyday so that we can place our faith in them more and more.

JOKE OF THE WEEK

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales.

The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small.

The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale.

Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible.

The little girl said, 'When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah'.

The teacher asked, 'What if Jonah went to hell?'

The little girl replied, 'Then you ask him'.

