

## 21<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME – YEAR C

In today's Gospel we are presented with a most unsettling and discomfoting image, exclusion! I can't help but feel the sting of the Master's rejection as well as, 'the weeping and grinding of teeth,' of those excluded from the feast.

Why does Jesus use such frightening imagery? Why does he not offer us words of comfort and consolation? The answer is love. God loves us just the way we are, but he loves us too much to leave us that way.

When we consider love, our minds conjure up warm and tender images. The love of a mother for her children, the love of husband and wife.

Love, however, can also be exacting and tough. If parents want their children to become fully functioning human beings, they know that in addition to loving them tenderly, they must also challenge their children so that they learn to take responsibility and grow in maturity. Even Jesus was not spared this form of love. He was made, "perfect through sufferings." ( Hebrews 2:10)

'Tough Love' is what Jesus offers us today, "Try your best to enter by the narrow door." Heaven is not guaranteed for any of us. Attending Church faithfully is not enough, we must put the lessons we learn there into practice in our lives. Remember those in our gospel today, they ate and drank in their master's company and heard him speak. They enjoyed his food but failed to heed his words and so were strangers to him.

The narrow way is the way of Jesus. It is the way of selfless, self-emptying service of God and our neighbour. Jesus has blazed this trail ahead of us and he is beckoning us to follow him.

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35).