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A man once stood up at a prayer meeting and confessed that he had been a drunkard, a wife beater, been unfaithful, aggressive, a jailbird, a robber. You name it he'd done it. And then he stuck out his chest and he said with all sincerity, 'But I want to thank God that, throughout those years, I never lost my religion. The Gospel today is a warning against those who take their salvation for granted.

Whenever it says in the gospel that 'Jesus was making for Jerusalem', it's a symbolic way of saying that he was making for the city of destiny where He would lay down His life for us. That was His narrow path which would lead to Resurrection. It involved rejection, humiliation and the Cross. The Devil had suggested to Him in the Desert to take the wide road of worldly power and recognition but Jesus send the devil packing.

Following the narrow way of Jesus will almost certainly run counter to the wide road of the world. Judging what's right or wrong, true or false solely on the strength of worldly wisdom alone would be foolhardy. People often make moral judgements, not on the basis of catholic teaching, but from a purely worldly point of view, more often than not based on public opinion. St Augustine said: "wrong is wrong even though everyone is doing it, right is right even though nobody is doing it". They are like the locked-out people in today's gospel, who had only a peripheral knowledge of Jesus but who never took his teaching seriously. They were more fans of Jesus than followers.

Have you ever been nagged for being 'over the top' with your religion or for trying too hard? Maybe the real problem is that we are not trying hard enough. In today's Gospel Jesus says: 'Try your best to enter by the narrow door because many will try to enter and will not succeed'. This doesn't at all mean that we see ourselves as artisans of our own salvation. Quite the

contrary – it's about co-operating with the grace of God without which no one can be saved.

Some Christians pride themselves on being saved in the here and now but this can betray a dangerous spiritual smugness. Even the great St Paul was loath to entertain such notions. He said: "I'm running in the race but I'm far from thinking that I've already won. "Even though my conscience is clear", he said, "it doesn't mean I'm acquitted". What does he mean? Well, he may have cut corners when informing his conscience or made moral judgements on how he personally felt at the time at odds with the real situation.

We all rightly hope and pray that our deceased loved ones are gone to a better place but our ultimate destiny is in God's merciful hands. In this context, I noticed that the Catholic Catechism urges priests to 'ease up' on longwinded eulogies at funerals because they can present an unreal picture of the deceased. God's eulogy is the only one that matters. He'll be the ultimate judge of whether we have entered by the narrow door or not.