



Balta Lelija

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## The Narrow Way

Mt 7:6,12-14

*'Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls in front of pigs, or they may trample them and then turn on you and tear you to pieces. So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and the Prophets. Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to destruction is wide and spacious, and many take it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it.'*

What did our Lord mean when He spoke of 'not casting that which is holy to the dogs'? At that time, those who did not belong to the People of Israel were called 'dogs'. Let us recall the passage in which Jesus speaks to the Canaanite woman and tells her that *"It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to little dogs."* (Mt 15:26). We all know the woman's magnificent response to this statement of the Lord.

What might these words mean in today's context?

The Holy Eucharist, which is the great treasure of the Church, along with the other sacraments, immediately comes to mind. In earlier times, a person converting to Catholicism had a long period of preparation before being able to receive communion. A much longer Eucharistic fast was also required, as is still common among our Orthodox brethren to this day. The whole celebration of the Holy Mass was embedded in a sacred atmosphere; the faithful in the Catholic Church received communion on their knees and in the mouth, etc...

Above all, it was important for the faithful to be well prepared and to receive the Holy Host only when they were in a state of grace, because the Eucharist is the supreme treasure of the Church, which could be distributed exclusively to the faithful! It was also only natural to believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, otherwise it would only be a memorial, as Protestant Christians usually celebrate it.

Today, however, there is a certain tendency to separate the Eucharist from the sacredness of Christ's sacrifice. Thus - as is the case at least in some countries - the Eucharist becomes more of a communal experience, in which everyone can participate, and not infrequently also those who are only there because they have

been invited to a baptism or marriage, although they are in reality far from the Church. The more the Holy Mass is deprived of its sacred character, the more easily those who are not in the right disposition to receive Holy Communion will also come forward to receive it.

What would happen if a person were told that he could not receive communion because he did not fulfil the necessary conditions for it? Is it possible that he would then turn against those who point this out to him?

The way following Christ is not wide and comfortable: “*How narrow is the gate and how narrow the way that leads to Life!*” Even if God's love is infinite and even if He tries to make the way as easy as possible for us, the seriousness of the demands involved in following the Lord remains: it is a clear call to conversion, which means putting one's own life under God's dominion!

A true encounter with God always leads to keeping His commandments and obeying His directives. In His infinite love, God will keep this condition in place and in no way change it because people today think differently.

In our time, it is good to be reminded again and again of the clarity of Jesus' words. We cannot think that God's mercy is to be understood in the sense that the demands and the exhortation to change our lives have been abolished. That would be a false understanding of mercy! It is precisely when we have experienced the Lord's grace that we feel even more compelled to reciprocate: “*When someone is entrusted with a great deal, of that person even more will be expected.*” (Lk 12:48). This is a simple consequence, for it reminds us to treat the good we have received with responsibility.

This could also be the warning we find in the last sentence of today's Gospel. As much as we can trust in God and in His love, we must guard against false self-confidence, which can become sinful and misleading. We must be vigilant not to stray from the narrow way in which the Lord leads us. It is wide enough to encompass many people, but there is no room for those who despise God's directives and commandments to walk on it.