



THE LORD'S FLOCK GROWTH DIGEST

PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES

Narrow Doors of Eternal Life

Rev. Fr. JC Gallora, Guest Priest
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The doors that lead to eternal life are narrow. If we fail to live properly these aspects or areas of our life, we will not be able to enter the narrow door to eternal life. As Jesus said, in Mt. 7:13, *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.”*

A priest reflected on this and came up with the acronym: S.H.A.M. The word sham means, shenanigans, fake, bogus.

The 4 Narrow Doors to Eternal Life (S.H.A.M.)

1. S: Self

- The self that has to be disciplined, guided, led, controlled, monitored, and tempered by the Holy Spirit.
- The self that should be surrendered to God and live in allegiance to no one but Jesus.
- We must deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Him (Lk. 9:23, Mt. 16:24).
- We cannot authentically follow Jesus without losing ourselves first and carrying our burdens.
- It is the self that we must conquer and we would not be able to conquer it without the aid of grace. Without the power coming from the risen Christ, it is impossible.
- Bear in mind: When Jesus rose from the dead, he gave us an enormous power beyond description and made us be able to lead a victorious life, especially in the areas of disciplining, tempering, controlling, and behaving ourselves.
- The self is also one of the forces that opposes us and is the reason why we fail to properly pray, relate to God and others. It is the reason why we lie and procrastinate.
- In the end, if any of us fail to enter heaven, as offered to us and decreed by God even before the foundation of the world, we can blame no

one but ourselves, especially since we are exposed to the Word of God, the Sacraments, the teachings of the church, formation, and service.

- The good news is that the Lord wants to accompany and guide us. God’s guidance and loving care is always available, but the question is, are we willing to cooperate?
- You cannot have this motto: Enjoy now, purity later. It is now or never because the time of reckoning might come earlier than the later part, when you intend to live a pure life.

2. H: Health

- A person who takes care of his health is a good steward for our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).
- Though we are bound by duty to take care of our bodies, we should not do it in an inordinate manner, bordering on vanity. Define what is a healthy lifestyle, which will enable us to serve God and others.
- The real glow of our health comes from knowing and living the truth. It comes from knowing what we are supposed to do, given our state of life and mission as parents, children, religious, government leaders, etc.
- We are aiming for the holistic health, not just bodily health.

3. A: Acceptance

- We do not need to change anything to make others see us differently. We must show everyone our true self.
- Everyone is born good. Along the way, as we grow in age and wisdom, we are also growing in our inclination to disobey, cause pain, malign others, tell lies, etc. When this happens, we veer away from natural goodness that is innate and God-given to us.
- When we sin, it is the presence and the power of sin controlling us and we should only be controlled by the Holy Spirit.
- Once a person realizes this and comes to renewal, he will be back to his true self.

- People often forget that the Lord loves them. They seek love and appreciation from other people and resort to doing all they can to get it.
- Before we were born, we were appreciated and love unconditionally by our Lord, who incarnated Himself in order to prove how sincere God is in loving us.
- If we are convinced that God loves us, we would start loving others. We will be extra tolerant and extra patient with others and will be able to see their good side. We will see others the way God sees all of us.
- The Lord always looks at us lovingly for He sees Himself in us as He created us in His image and likeness. So, naturally, we must love and accept ourselves. We have a problem if we do not love and like ourselves.
- God loves us and part of loving us, even with the presence of sin, is that God is helping us to extricate ourselves from the sinful situation so that we would not continue to live in sin.
- We are all sinners but we should not continue living in sin. We are sinners, but redeemed and loved by God. We are sinners yet overcomers through the power of God's grace.
- Learn to appreciate others and give appreciation to whom it is due.
- When we feel unappreciated by others, remember that the Lord accepts us and loves us and that He helps us work on our rough edges.

4. M: Money

- We need money for it is the legal tender today used to acquire goods and services.
- Money is a good servant but it is a poor master.
- For the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10).
- Use money for good work and give back to God what belongs to Him.
- Regard money correctly.

The S.H.A.M. (Self, Health, Acceptance, and Money) will be our stumbling blocks to eternal life if we are enslaved by any or all of it.

The four are considered the narrow doors to eternal life because you need constancy, vigilance, prayer, discipline but in the end, it is worth it because nothing

in this world can come close to eternal life, God's gift to us at the cost of the blood and life of Jesus Himself.

So, watch these doors closely. Try to avoid letting any of these get in the way of us attaining eternal life. Try our best to see and value all these in a proper perspective. Also, do not let the world influence us. Remember, the world is one of the sources of temptations because humans are not the only ones who were fallen, but the entire creation.

In the coming of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is brought to earth. God's kingdom is being established here because God's kingdom is fully enforced in heaven. For, after more than 2000 years of preaching the Good News, many are yet to surrender to the message of the Gospel. Many are yet to embrace the truth of Christian faith. Many are yet to live a life pleasing to God, even among us Christians.

You cannot expect perfection in the world. The measuring rod for doing good is not the world, but the Word of God.

Remember the admonition of St. Paul: "You are from this world but you are not of this world. You are temporary travelers, pilgrims, in this world." Our permanent residence is in heaven.

Do not consume our energy pleasing, enjoying, and yielding to the world, but put a great amount of our energy in storing up treasures for heaven, where burglars cannot break in.

Let us live with one another to build a community of faith. Let us learn from one another, encourage and support each other because we are one body, where Christ is the head.

<p>Transcriber/Writer: Sis. Jen Ilagan Editor: Sis. Rhia Ilagan Printing Sponsor: Sis. Rhia Ilagan</p>
