

Christ the King 2020

Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus' final discourse for the **End of Time** in Matthew concludes with a picture of the final judgment. Here he makes the most vivid appeal in the Gospels for an **active, caring Christianity**. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus demanded of his disciples the "better righteousness." Here Jesus calls righteous those who have recognized him in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the imprisoned, the sick. These he identifies with the "least of his brothers (and sisters)."

We learn first about Jesus himself through the different titles that others give him. "**The Son of Man**," who judges and the one to whom all authority on earth and in heaven has been given. As **King**, the title given him at the beginning by the Magi and at the cross by his enemies. As **shepherd** who separates the sheep from the goats. As **Lord**, the title which reflects his dignity as the Exalted One. And as **Emmanuel**, "God with Us," in his presence in the 'least of the brethren."

Few of us are virtuous enough to care for the least among us **all the time**, in every circumstances. Hopefully none of us totally ignore the needy. We likely fall somewhere in between, helping when we feel we can, but ignoring the needy at other times and in some circumstances. Often we choose to spend that money on ourselves or spend that extra time on something we enjoy. We can pray for the grace to make us more generous, at the same time hoping God's mercy is even more generous.

I remember the first time I decided it was time to do some **corporal works of mercy**, as my Mom would say. I had a good job at the University of Dayton and the mass where I attended at the chapel, had wonderful Marianist priests that challenged us to reach out to others. And so I did. I volunteered to visit a local Rest Home for the Elderly, and went there to play the piano. I'm not really a great piano player in public because I get nervous...but quite satisfied with myself when I play alone. This was attested to the fact that not many of the residents came to listen; at first they did. One or two ladies were always there, though, and I realized that they wanted to talk more than to listen.

That was the first time I had to swallow my pride and be honest with myself why I was really there. So they could listen to my music, or so that I could listen to their

hearts. I continued to keep coming for those two ladies. OK, that sounds nice, but there was a third lady. She would wander in every once in a while, asking for a cigarette, oblivious to the fact that I was actually playing the piano, expecting me to stop and give her a cigarette. I had just stopped smoking. She was incontinent as I found out, and seemed make that known when I refused her a cigarette. And then the thought caught me unawares that here is Jesus in a fantastic disguise. I continued to keep coming...for those three ladies.

Jesus spent his entire public ministry helping those in need; healing the sick, driving out demons, feeding thousands, washing his disciples' feet, finally giving his life for us. Yes, Jesus' miracles were a great help in all the above except the last two, but in Mark's gospel, Jesus is really the reluctant healer.

So note that Jesus also asked ***the woman at the well*** to draw water for him, reclined at table and ***allowed Martha to serve him***, and accepted the anointing with expansive perfumed oil ***by the woman in Bethany***. Christ is in all, giver and recipient, and it is in acts of mercy between two people that he can be seen.

But there is one thing more that this gospel reminds us of, is that Jesus continues to suffer in us, when he said, "I was hungry...I was thirsty...I was a stranger...I was naked...I was ill and in prison." That means ***Jesus suffers until the end of time***, until the "End of Time!" when the last human begin on this planet dies. Only a God can do that for us. But Jesus also celebrates ***with us*** and continues to walk out that door ***in us***.

As we continue to celebrate this Eucharist, let us remember that in the power of communion it is Jesus who also walks out that door "***in us***" but depends on us to make him known to others this day.