



Blessed Sacrament Parish

Homily by Father Chris Comerford

November 26, 2017 The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Reading I Exodus 34:11-12, 15-17

Psalm 23:1-6

Reading II 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Gospel Matthew 25:31-46

Homily

We have been hearing the parables about the end times and the last days for the last few weeks, and today we hear Jesus tell us about what will happen for the final judgment. We hear this in the context of the Feast of Jesus as our Lord, as Christ the King. And we know that Jesus's kingship is different from the way of the world. I showed the kids the representation on my vestment that shows the crown on the Cross. And this vestment is one that I wore to celebrate Mass when Pope St. Paul II came to St. Louis and the vestment that the priests in the archdiocese of St. Louis wore. I was fortunate to be able to buy it and wore it when the Holy Father was here.

It fits very well for this feast day when we think of the kingship of Jesus. He isn't one who demanded power and submission. He did not take advantage of his people and did not have this idea that holding that power over the people was the thing to do. But the image of Jesus as King is the image we heard from Ezekiel, of the good shepherd as God himself cares for the flock. We can see that represented in how they are divided as sheep and goats. The sheep are the blessed ones, the goats not so much. I think the goats get a bad wrap here, but you have to look at the personalities of sheep and goats and it kind of fits. The sheep need to be led and are followers. Goats are pretty stubborn. If you see goats they want to do things their own way. They eat whatever they can put into their mouths, and they have no self-control in that way.

So you see how that division happens and people think, "The right side is good, the left side is bad." I don't think that it is about where you sit in church, or the right or left side. I don't think it is about those who are right-handed and left-handed. I am left-handed if you have noticed. So, the left side is not always the bad side. It was difficult for my grandmother. When she was in school they tied her left hand behind her back so that she would learn to write with her right hand. You probably have heard stories about this kind of treatment, but this really happened.

So, what do we have today? What is this showing us? It is not about division, but it is about what we are ultimately judged on. I think Jesus is teaching us very much about how we need to see him. We see that in the way we are called to care for others. The first ones are blessed. Why? Jesus says, "When I was hungry, you gave me something to

eat. When I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was naked you clothed me, when I was in prison you visited me.” The disciples asked, “When did we do this?” And you know the answer. Jesus said, “When you did it to one of your brothers and sisters, when you helped them, you did it to me.”

Saint Mother Teresa taught us this in a great way — how to really see Christ in those we are caring for, and that is often a challenge. She would say, “I see Christ every day in the disguise of the poor and needy.” That is what we are called to do. It is when we are called. That is when we are following Jesus Christ. It calls us to care for our brothers and sisters, especially those who are in need. What happens is we are often in the second group that did not intentionally avoid helping others. It just kind of happened and that often is the way. Often we think of the things we did wrong that we are judged on, but ultimately we are also judged on things we failed to do, those good things we failed to do. We often talk about them as sins of omission.

So we hear how we are called to be this way in the corporal works of mercy, to show this love for our brothers and sisters. We don’t do it because we are going to be judged, we do it because this is the way we are called to love. And that is when we are close to God, the desire we all have. Now it is a challenge to do this, especially for those in need. We find sometimes a problem or an interruption and we are not sure how those in need will use what we give them. We may be taken advantage of. We have to be careful but that is often the way to avoid the difficult situation and to avoid helping those right around us. We need to pray for this and take advantage of these opportunities. These are the times we are called to be Christ. We pray for that.

There are some ways we can do this very directly. There are ways we can reach out and help those groups that already exist to help people in need. We will give you an opportunity to do that during the Advent Season. If you look in your bulletin this week you will see that we will be collecting the items we have asked for in the past. There will be something different to bring every Sunday in Advent, the four Sundays coming up. The items needed are listed in the bulletin and they will be given to Catholic Charities and Ladies of Charity who will distribute them. So, please participate. This is a great way to help and think about others at this time of year in a special way.

Another thing we are going to offer is an idea our Pastoral Council came up with and it is to provide socks and underwear for those who are in need. When you think about when you receive clothes you do not mind wearing hand-me-downs, but not underwear and socks. So, it is great that we provide these items to those who are in need so they will have clean underwear and socks to wear. There are bins at each of the doors of the church and you can bring back socks and underwear each week during Advent. This is a great way to offer something personal to someone in need.

Another way we have is the St. Vincent DePaul Society that is part of our parish. They are able to work with those who come before me and the Society, and then those funds

are uses to reach out to help those in need. It is not so much a handout, but a hand up to help others.

They do a great job, very quietly. They don't seek attention for themselves. You may have seen an envelope stapled in the bulletin for you to make a contribution. If you forgot yours or accidentally threw yours away, there are still envelopes at the back of your church and we encourage you to donate to the St. Vincent DePaul Society that does such great work. Some of those in need who request help are from our own parish. Whatever way you are drawn to do this, this is a way to see Christ in others — by helping them. Jesus has told us, "These are the things we are judged on. These are the things for which we need to open our hearts."

So let's pray for that. Let's pray for the strength and the openness to be able to see Christ in those in need, and follow his example as our King, as our Good Shepherd — and pray for the grace to live this out in our daily lives.

*Father Christopher Comerford is pastor at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Quincy, IL.
(TASCAM DR 40 file 0062)*