

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson

26th November 2023 - Christ the King

Readings (Year A): 1st: Ezekiel 34:11-12,15-17. 2nd: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26,28.

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46.

The image of St Mother Teresa bending over an outcast or picking up and cuddling orphans won the admiration of believers and non-believers alike. They saw a striking recognition of the bond that binds together all of humanity and that calls for mutual service.

Yet what inspired her most deeply was the vision of such outcasts as brothers and sisters in Christ. She would have said she was only fulfilling today's gospel. She was doing something that she herself often described as "something beautiful for God."

Jesus says we will be judged by our fulfilment or failure to follow the second great commandment, to love our neighbour as ourselves. Unlike the scribe in the gospel, Mother Teresa did not ask "And who is my neighbour?" She looked at the destitute and sick, those in the gutter and saw Christ there in them.

Through her own perception of this mystery, she led many others into a similar way of service to Christ. It is very easy to exclude and condemn people – to divide people into "them" and "us." And when we do, whether we are doing it consciously or not, we then tend to treat people in different ways.

Those we love, those we like, those we think of as 'one of us' we look favourably upon. We are willing to be kind to them, to care for them, to help them when they are in need.

The others, the people we don't think we have anything in common with; the one's we may think of as 'different' from us, we tend to keep away from and don't see why we should have anything to do with them.

Yet it is intriguing how the 'blessed' in the gospel respond when the King praises them for the love that they have shown him. They are astounded. They hadn't realised that they have been showing love and care to Jesus.

This is simply because those who are blessed in God's kingdom are those who are willing to show love and care towards all people, whoever they may be, no matter whether they are "one of us" or not.

Jesus is saying that those who are willing to open their hearts to all of humanity, the kingdom of God is theirs.

Today's feast of Christ the King invites us to celebrate a king who embraced humanity with compassion and love, neither rejecting nor excluding anyone.

It is challenging because our secular world encourages individualism.

As people of the body of Christ, we are called to selfless love in communion with one another. Jesus does not distinguish between rich and poor, between sick and healthy, between victim and criminal. Jesus loves all of them, all of us, unconditionally.

If we are to be true followers of Jesus, he calls us to be prepared to do the same, to love unconditionally, the loveable and the unlovable.

For when we embrace our fellow humans, we also embrace Christ, as he says, "in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it to me."

Bishop Robert Barron has quite a section on this gospel, bringing particularly out "**did it to me**" reminding us that no other religious leader would put the emphasis on **me**.

Our Lord Jesus Christ does as King of the Universe.

Bp. Barron gives great mention to Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin who in the depression of the 1930's saw the radical thrust of today's gospel, and founded and distributed their newspaper *Catholic Worker* that presented Catholic Social Teaching and set up Catholic Worker Houses of hospitality in New York where the poor would be welcomed and where the corporal and spiritual works of mercy would be practiced.

Throughout their lives Dorothy and Peter attended daily Mass and Benediction, participated in retreats, prayed the Rosary, for they saw in their radical devotion to the poor an inescapable correlation to their even more radical love of Christ. They rightly combined adoration with action: true faith: for in Catholicism, it is **both and** not **either or**!

Mother Teresa operated in very much the same spirit. Her day was taken up with prayer and meditation, Mass, Eucharistic Adoration and Rosary, the rest of the time spent doing the grittiest work amongst the poor of the poor.

Fr. Paul Murray, an Irish Dominican spiritual writer and sometimes advisor to Mother relates that one day in deep conversation with Mother at the end of their long talk, she asked him to spread his hand out on the table and, touching his fingers one by one as she spoke said, "**You did it to me.**"

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