

Christ the King 2017  
Nov. 26, 2017  
Holy Spirit (HG)

Ez 34:11-12, 15-17  
I Cor 15:20-26, 28  
Matt 25:31-46

- I. You've probably seen the TV spot featuring the man who talks about his years as president of Planned Parenthood. It seems like he is trying to send the message that he is proud of his work and role, and that this was a good thing.

In light of today's gospel reading, I can't but help but find myself asking the question, "What are you going to say to Jesus on Judgment Day? What do you think Jesus thinks of that?"

I don't think I would want to be in his shoes.

But in all fairness – and not to be merely judgmental towards him – I ask myself the same questions as I look into *my* life and recall things I've done or failed to do. How defensible is that, I wonder? How will this conversation with Jesus go? It really doesn't make me feel all that comfortable.

I say this to you today NOT to inflict guilt – NOT to scare you – but to say... this is serious stuff! Jesus himself says that on Judgment Day, the Son of Man will come with all the nations assembled before him. He will separate them, one from another, with the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. And he will ask, "How did you do? When and how did you reach out to the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, those most in need?"

The steps we take now in this life – the decisions we make today – help to create the future we will know in the future, especially in eternity.

- II. Taking care of the poor is not just a nice idea in scripture. It is not something we can just ignore or rationalize away. This is for *real*.

In a Thanksgiving message to the nation, Cardinal DiNardo, president of the U.S. conference of Catholic Bishops, appeals to our concern for the vulnerable. He reported on the national meeting of the bishops last week in Baltimore where they were attentive "in a special way to those who are often excluded from (the great abundance of this nation) – the poor, the sick, the addicted, the unborn, the unemployed, and especially migrants and refugees. My brothers expressed a shared and ever-greater sense of alarm – and *urgency to act* -...."

Pope Francis has been leading the way for us to learn the importance of this gospel message. We know that as Cardinal, he lived in a plain apartment, traveled by public transport and worked among the poor in the Barrio. He himself has lived this message and has been repeatedly teaching us this is the way to live as a disciple of Jesus.

The latest way in which Pope Francis is leading us is by establishing an annual World Day of the Poor to be observed the 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time. The intent of this day is not to be a day of prayer for the poor, but a day to actually do something!

- III. Reaching out to the poor, the weak, the vulnerable – is not an extra...is not an add-on to life...is not something I will do when I get more time...when I get around to it...when it becomes convenient for me to do. REACHING OUT TO THE POOR, THE WEAK, THE VULNERABLE SHOULD BE A NORMAL AND NATURAL WAY WE GO ABOUT LIVING AS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS. Those in the gospel who are rewarded for their actions are surprised they did anything at all! They ask, “Well, when did we see you hungry? When did we give you a drink? When did we visit you? When did we welcome you? When did we cloth you?”

And Jesus responds, “Whenever you did it for one of these least ones, you did it for me.”

- IV. Thankfully, we live in an area where there are many opportunities we can plug in to in order to assist caring for those in need.

- just now after Thanksgiving, the paper reported that over 2,000 meals were served in the community wide Thanksgiving meal. There are many we could volunteer helping to prepare food, serve food, deliver meals to people.
- we have social service agencies to help women and children
- agencies and organizations that help people facing unplanned pregnancies
- the Veterans Freedom Center helping veterans
- the Presentation Lantern Center helping immigrants adjust to a new culture
- several organizations helping the homeless, especially men
- schools needing help tutoring children

The list goes on and on – with dozens of non-profit organizations reaching out to help those in need. And there are always those individuals we know in our families or neighborhoods who can use a helping hand. We can’t say there is nothing to do!

V. On this Solemnity of Christ the King, our scriptures give us three different visions of the end times and what that might be like.

- the vision from Ezekiel sees God coming at the end time to take care of things himself: what those responsible should have done, but did not do, God himself will take care of. This image emphasizes God's saving love and grace, reminding us the God named Emanuel will always be with us.
- the vision from St. Paul in the second reading reflects upon the universal effects of the Resurrection of Christ. In the end, God will draw all things to himself; Jesus draws all creation into the very energy of God
- and Matthew's vision teaches each of us has a part to play in this process. In this vision we have a responsibility to fulfill. This image reminds us we have been given freedom to choose our life – and the way we live now helps to fashion our eternal future.

So, the overall scriptural message of this Solemnity is a mix of comforting and reassuring message of God's abiding presence as well as an uncomfortable challenge for us to step up to the plate and do our part.

When we must face the Son of Man on Judgment Day, will we be proud of all we have said and done? Will we be squirming – or will we be comfortable, ready to receive God's warm embrace and love?

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Fr. Dwayne Thoman