

GOSPEL

Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, “Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me.” Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?” And the King will answer, “I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.” Next he will say to those on his left hand, “Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me.” Then it will be their turn to ask, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?” Then he will answer, “I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.” And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life.’

HOMILY OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

20 November 2011, Excerpt

The Gospel which we have just heard tells us that Jesus, the Son of Man, the ultimate judge of our lives, wished to appear as one who hungers and thirsts, as a stranger, as one of those who are naked, sick or imprisoned, ultimately, of those who suffer or are outcast; how we treat them will be taken as the way we treat Jesus himself. We do not see here a simple

literary device, or a simple metaphor. Jesus’s entire existence is an example of it. He, the Son of God, became man, he shared our existence, even down to the smallest details, he became the servant of the least of his brothers and sisters. He who had nowhere to lay his head, was condemned to death on a cross. This is the King we celebrate!

Without a doubt this can appear a little disconcerting to us. Today, like two thousand years ago, accustomed to seeing the signs of royalty in success, power, money and ability, we find it hard to accept such a king, a king who makes himself the servant of the little ones, of the most humble, a king whose throne is a cross. And yet, the Scriptures tell us, in this is the glory of Christ revealed; it is in the humility of his earthly existence that he finds his power to judge the world. For him, to reign is to serve! And what he asks of us is to follow him along the way, to serve, to be attentive to the cry of the poor, the weak, the outcast. The baptized know that the decision to follow Christ can entail great sacrifices, at times even the sacrifice of one’s life. However, as Saint Paul reminds us, Christ has overcome death and he brings us with him in his resurrection. He introduces us to a new world, a world of freedom and joy. Today, so much still binds us to the world of the past, so many fears hold us prisoners and prevent us from living in freedom and happiness. Let us allow Christ to free us from the world of the past! Our faith in him, which frees us from all our fears and miseries, gives us access to a new world, a world where justice and truth are not a byword, a world of interior freedom and of peace with ourselves, with our neighbours and with God. This is the gift God gave us at our baptism!

“Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34). Let us receive this word of blessing which the Son of Man will, on the Day of Judgement, address to those who have recognized his presence in the lowliest of their brethren, with a heart free and full of the love of the Lord! Brothers and sisters, the words of the Gospel are truly words of hope, because the King of the universe has drawn near to us, the servant of the least and lowliest ... Have courage! Jesus wanted to identify himself with the poor, with the sick; he wanted to share your suffering and to

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see you as his brothers and sisters, to free you from every affliction, from all suffering. Every sick person, every poor person deserves our respect and our love because, through them, God shows us the way to heaven.

On this feast day, we rejoice together in the reign of Christ the King over the whole world. He is the one who removes all that hinders reconciliation, justice and peace. We are reminded that true royalty does not consist in a show of power, but in the humility of service; not in the oppression of the weak, but in the ability to protect them and to lead them to life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10). Christ reigns from the Cross and, with his arms open wide, he embraces all the peoples of the world and draws them into unity. Through the Cross, he breaks down the walls of division, he reconciles us with each other and with the Father.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: Pope Benedict XVI says that Christ reveals his kingship not through power, but through service. How does this challenge the way the world usually understands success and greatness?



Heart: Jesus identifies himself with the hungry, the sick, the stranger, and the outcast. Who are the people you find easiest to overlook, avoid, or keep at a distance?



Hands: This week, how can you intentionally serve or show kindness to someone in need, recognising Christ's presence in them?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.