



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend, we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King – the last Sunday of the liturgical year. (Next Sunday is the First Sunday of Advent, the beginning of the new liturgical year. We will enter "Year B" of our three year cycle of readings at Sunday Masses. Throughout the year, we will hear primarily from the Gospel of Mark.) In our Gospel this weekend, we listen to Jesus telling us of the Last Judgment. Jesus says that all the nations will be gathered before Him on that last day, the Day of Judgment. On this great and terrible day, we will either hear, "**Come, you who are blessed by my Father.**

**Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world**" (Matthew 25:34) or "**Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels**" (Matthew 25:41). We like to think about the first, but not the second eventuality, yet Jesus has revealed both of these to us. He tells us of the judgment so that we may be prepared.

When we look at what separates the "sheep" from the "goats" in Jesus' teaching, it is whether they cared for Jesus or not. Where was Jesus present? In "**the least brothers of mine**" (Matthew 25:40, 45). Jesus shows that He identifies Himself with these least ones – the ones who are needy: hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, ill, or in prison. In the story, neither group recognized Jesus, but He was there!

Jesus reminds us that care for the needy among us is care for Him. This is vitally important. Christian charity of others is not the same as humanism. We don't take care of others because it makes us feel good, or we get accolades, or some other warm-fuzzy. We do it because it is the command of Christ, and because we love Him! Even if we have nothing physically to give to another in need, we are called to give the person dignity – striving to see Jesus' image in that person.

St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) did this so well. She looked for her beloved Jesus in each person she met... and because of that, we know her to be a saint! There's a famous story of a reporter watching Mother Teresa clean the maggot-infested wound of a man on the street. He said to her, "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars." She replied, "Nor would I." In that response, she highlighted that it was not for anything in this world that she did what she did, but for *love* of the Creator of the world.

If you were invited to take a job at which someone would throw up on you, empty their bladder and bowels on you, constantly call on you to take care of their basic needs, and never once thank you, would you take it? What would be your salary requirements? Yet parents do this all the time in the first years of their children's lives. For free! They do it out of *love*.

Love must be the motivating factor in our care for those in need – not feelings, or even an elusive idea that "it's the right thing to do." Love must motivate our actions. The saints tell us that it is *only love* that gives merit to our actions. We could give all of our money away, but if we don't have love, we gain nothing (see I Corinthians 13:3). On the other hand, love lends eternal weight to the smallest, most insignificant acts.

As we enter the last week of the year, let us ask God to expand our love, so that we may reach out to Him, love Him in each person that we meet so that we may hear "**Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**"