

***The Solemnity of Jesus Christ the King
Homily ~ November 20, 2011***

*Rev. Andrew Czajkowski
The Catholic Community of
St. John the Evangelist &
Blessed Sacrament*

Have you noticed that a lot of people seemed to have graduated from “Bumper Sticker Seminary”? They proclaim their theological position on their cars or van. On bumper sticker says, JESUS IS COMING AGAIN, AND BOY IS HE MAD! Another says, JESUS IS COMING! LOOK BUSY!

Like it or not, judgment is a fact of life. That is true whether we are talking about the histories of nations or the events of our own personal life. The recent events at Penn State remind us of that. We simply cannot escape judgment in life. On this last weekend of the Church year, Jesus tells us a story about the Final Judgment. A shepherd divides the sheep from the goats—so shall there be a great division on the final day. Those on the right will be allowed entrance into the Kingdom while those on the left will be denied it.

What can we learn from today’s parable? First, the parable reminds us that we are to view each individual as though he or she were Jesus himself. “*Lord, when did we feed you, or clothe you, or visit you in prison?*” was the question asked. Came the response, “*Whatever you did to the least of these, you did it to me.*”

There is an old children’s story, one that perhaps most of you have heard. The king’s aide advised the mayor of a small village that his majesty was going to be making a visit to their humble little village. With great fanfare, the mayor began to make the appropriate arrangements. On the day of the arrival, the mayor, dressed in his finery and waited in joyful anticipation. The hours slowly ticked away but no one ventured into the village—no one that is except a lonely, lame beggar who asked the mayor for a drink to quench his thirst. Irritated, the mayor brushed him aside. He had no time for dredges such as this person for he was waiting for the king. Yet at the end of the day, the mayor stood alone; the king had never arrived. Furious, he wrote the king’s aide asking what had gone wrong, only to be told that the king had indeed passed through his village that day. He was traveling incognito. He had come in the disguise of a lonely, lame beggar.

Who is Christ? Christ is everyman; and there will be those who say, “But Master, if we had only known that it was you, we would have responded.” That is

precisely the point. If the innkeeper had known that Mary was carrying within her womb the long-awaited Messiah, no doubt he would have made room for them on that fateful night.

Mother Teresa was asked how she could minister to people with such horrid illnesses. She simply replied, “I just pretend they are Jesus.” Every time we do something that helps those who cannot help themselves, we are ministering to Jesus.

Today’s parable also reminds us that in the end, the criteria by which we shall be judged will be simple acts of kindness—how kind an individual was, feeding those who were hungry, showing concern for those in prison, taking care of those who did not have sufficient clothing.

Who would ever think that such simple acts would carry so much weight on the final day? When we think of Divine Judgment, we think of a few life-making decisions. But according to the story, judgment comes every single day in the little commonplace things that we do or we do not do. Jesus is saying that the main business we are in is the business of kindness.

We are judged not just on the bad we do, we are also judged on the good that we do *not* do. Those on the left of the king were denied entrance into the Kingdom. Why? Because he said, “*I was thirsty and you gave me no water. I was in prison and you never came to see me. I was without clothes and you never gave me any.*”

We think of Divine Judgment as opposite of this. We think that the thing that will get us into heaven is by refraining from certain sins. But the point of the parable is there are many fine, decent, respectable people who are not doing anything for Christ. Last week Jesus told the story about a man who took his talent and buried it. Why did Jesus condemn him? Not because he gambled it away, nor because he frivolously spent it, but because he did nothing with it.

Those on the left were kept out of the Kingdom of God, not because of what they did but because of what they failed to do. Remember the teachings of our Church: The sins of omission are as real as the sins of commission. Forgive us, Lord, not for what we do, but what we didn’t do.

The season you and I are about ready to enter—Thanksgiving and Advent and Christmas—gives us great opportunities to see the poor at the doors of our heart. Next weekend we will have the Giving Tree and it will be multiplied with tons of requests for the needy served through Christian Service, Outreach East, the North End Soup Kitchen, and Genesee County Mental Health—the very beautiful hands-on approach to our neighbor’s needs 52 weeks of the year. Likewise, we will be having a baby shower at the end of Advent for the newborn and soon-to-be born that are served by Right to Life of Greater Michigan and Lapeer County. And we mustn’t forget our elderly sisters who once again will have the annual gathering to help them in their need as many of them are elderly and no longer have income to pay for their mounting health care bills.

These are just some ways, some opportunities, where Jesus invites us to not look aside or be too busy. Remember, Jesus is standing here at the door of our hearts and the door can only be opened by those who are within. He invites us to open it and to say,

*“Lord, Jesus, open my eyes and my heart,
open my way of life to see those in need,
for in seeing them, I see you.”*

*St. John the Evangelist
≈140th Jubilee ≈*

1871  2011