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Commentary on the Gospel: Solemnity of Christ the King (Year B)

Gospel for the Sunday of the Solemnity of Christ the King (Cycle A), and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 25:31-46*)

“When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep

at his right hand, but the goats at the left.

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from 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 welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?'

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to

one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'

Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?'

Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Commentary

Jesus' words in this Gospel passage are very consoling when we see all the personal and social injustice in our society today.

We are witnesses to a daily struggle between good and evil. At times it may seem that in this world those who are strongest and have the most means are able to impose themselves on the rest, to oppress them. But Jesus makes clear that evil does not have the last word. God is just, and justice will triumph.

In the Creed we profess that Christ “ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.” There lies our certainty that the definitive triumph will be on the side of the good.

“In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man’s relationship with God will be laid bare. The Last Judgment,” the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life.”[1] Some will be condemned and others will be saved.

The *Catechism* explains hell by recalling some words from the first letter of Saint John: “He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him’ (1 Jn 3:15). Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren.”[2]

But it also reminds us of the joyful reality of heaven: “By his death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ has ‘opened’ heaven to us. The life of the blessed consists in the full and perfect possession of the fruits of the redemption accomplished by Christ. He makes partners in his heavenly glorification those who have believed in him and remained faithful to his will. Heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ.”[3]

The Son of Man identifies himself at the moment of judgment with the hungry and thirsty, with strangers and the naked, the sick and the imprisoned—with all those who suffer in this world— and He views our behavior towards them as if it had been done to Himself.

As Saint Josemaria reminds us: “We must learn to recognize Christ when He comes out to meet us in our

fellow men and women. No human life is ever isolated. It is bound up with other lives. No man or woman is a single verse; we all make up one divine poem which God writes with the cooperation of our freedom.”[4]

These are not simply nice words, but rather speak about the deepest reality of Jesus. The Son of God, on becoming a man in Jesus, made Himself one of us. He lived in poverty, acquainted with pain, hunger, thirst and persecution, dying naked on the Cross.

The universal Judge will be the one who suffered all this. He experienced in his own flesh how painful the presumptuous contempt of the selfish is, and also how consoling is the love of generous hearts, of people who do not heedlessly ignore the needs of their brothers and sisters.

[1] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,
no. 1039.

[2] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,
no. 1033.

[3] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,
no. 1026.

[4] Saint Josemaria, *Christ is Passing
By*, no. 111.

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