

26. November 2023

Solemnity of Christ the King "Judged in love"

Mt 25:31-46

At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: 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."

Today, on the Solemnity of Christ the King, the Church recalls the Lord who will return at the end of time to judge all peoples. Our whole life is laid bare before Him, and nothing is hidden from Him. This reality can shake us and make us take responsibility.

True discipleship of Christ always leads to concrete action. Sacred Scripture never tires of telling us that faith must be put into practice in love for our neighbour. Today's Gospel makes it clear that we will be tested in love to the extent that we have practised works of mercy towards our neighbour. Mercy becomes so important in the Gospel that

the Lord even presents it to us as the decisive criterion for the Last Judgement. Therefore, no one who wants to follow God's way can evade this responsibility of love without running the risk of being rejected by the Lord.

We can understand the unconditionality of the requirement of charity by contemplating God's own love for us. Love is the reason for our existence. It was God's free decision to call rational creatures to life and to make them sharers in His glory.

It is worth letting this truth about the reason for our existence settle deep in our hearts. God is the great 'You' who loves us and who has prepared everything on earth - both material and spiritual - for us to live in. Under normal circumstances, the family is a reflection of this reality. Parents prepare everything for their child and try to give him or her the best living conditions. It is natural for parents to give their children all their attention and love. It would be worrying if we knew of parents who did not give this attention to their children. Other family members are also involved in caring for the child. This right of children to be cared for is so deeply rooted in our society that if parents do not fulfil this obligation, they can be deprived of their parental rights or, in the worst case, even punished.

Through this example we can understand how God the Father cares for all His children. But since we are all part of this great family, He shares with us the responsibility of caring for His children. Just as He cares for us, He wants us to care for our neighbour with brotherly love. Since God has called us into a universal family, beyond the bonds of blood, our love and help must not be limited to our natural relatives. The love we have received from God our Father urgently calls us to share it with others.

But the Gospel takes us even further! Through the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus commits Himself to human beings to the point of saying: *“as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me”*.

In this way, as Jesus tells us, every service we render to our neighbour is a service to God Himself, and we can find God in all those who need our help and love. This was the spirituality of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, which she passed on to her entire order. Her mission is to seek out the poor, to find Jesus in them and serve Him.

So let us be attentive to the opportunities that present themselves to help those in need, and let us understand ever more clearly that in doing so we are fulfilling God's will, drawing closer to Him and serving Him Himself.