

Homily - Christ the King - Year A - November 26, 2017

Well, we have survived Thanksgiving, the tryptophan induced coma from the turkey dinner on Thursday, repeated on Friday with the turkey sandwiches. Then there was Black Friday, small business Saturday, and now we anxiously await cyber Monday.

Sandwiched among all of that, we have today's feast, Christ the King. What's even worse about this feast is that we are being asked in the gospel: "Would you like to be a sheep or a goat?" Well, frankly, I prefer being human, don't want to be either one. If I had to choose, it would be goat. After all, a sheep is just very...well...sheepish. However, after listening to today's gospel, it seems that, in the imagery used by Jesus, being a sheep is much better than being a goat.

If you are a goat, today's gospel might annoy you a lot. After all, the goats end up going to eternal punishment. No discussion, no excuses, no second chance...at the time of judgement, all is final. This portion of the gospel should make us ponder quite a bit especially since we do not tend to like the idea of judgement or of punishment, and even less like the idea of eternal punishment. We prefer the warm, fuzzy Jesus, but the real Jesus also judges, rewards, calls us to account, and, if needed, as in the gospel, ranks us among the goats, the ones who did not respond to his calls.

The story or parable found in the gospel clearly speaks about one's ability to see Christ rather than just see the appearances, to go beyond the outward reality and see the inward beauty. The gospel story does not instruct us to do good deeds merely because they deserve merit. Rather the gospel story tells us to do good for one another because Christ can be found in those situations where he seems least present.

Today's gospel may seem especially important as we approach Christmas and think of the less fortunate. But the less fortunate have needs in March, April, and May as much as they do in November and December. In other words, our outreach to Christ through those in need does not occur merely today or next week. Our outreach must continue throughout our lives even outside of the Christmas season.

We believe that our Catholic faith expresses itself in our doing good to others. However, our Catholic faith surpasses the good deed because our faith tells us that Christ is at the heart of the good deed. Effectively, our gospel passage this weekend does not merely exhort us to do good works.

Rather, the gospel pushes us to go beyond the external appearances to see what may not be evident, to see that doing goodness to others reflects the goodness Christ has done for us, that exercising generosity to others expresses Christ's generosity to us, that caring for the needs of others reflects Christ's care for us.

The casual observer will see good deeds as good deeds. The faith person will see good deeds as opportunities to extend Christ's love and concern throughout the world. The deeds may appear the same. The motivating force differs vastly, but a force that can transcend all human weakness because it is rooted in Jesus himself.

So, how do you view or see the situations of life? Christ could be there waiting for your attention. After all, Christ the King, our Judge, just may be in that situation. At the end of the day, do you want to be a goat or a sheep?