

HOMILY for the FEAST of CHRIST the KING – Year A

This Sunday's Gospel tells us the story of sheep and goats on the Judgment Day. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story, I'd like to share with you.

A young couple invited their pastor for an evening dinner. While they were in the kitchen preparing the meal, their young son was in the living room entertaining the pastor.

"What are we having for dinner this evening?" the minister asked.

"Goat," replied the boy.

"Goat?" repeated the startled pastor. "Are you sure about that?"

"Yep," said the youngster. "I heard Dad tell Mom, 'Might as well have the old goat for dinner today as any other day.'"

Anyway, this Sunday the Church celebrates the Feast of Christ the King. This feast is put at the end of the liturgical year not by accident, but to remind us that Christ will come again to put an end to His enemies & judge the living & the dead. Today's Gospel shows us a scene of Christ's second coming as He'll be escorted by all the angels of Heaven & assemble all the nations before Him for judgment. Then, He'll separate them into two groups like a shepherd separates sheep from goats. He'll put the sheep on His right & the goats on His left. He'll say to those on His right: "Come, you have my Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the Creation of the world. For I was hungry & you gave me food, I was thirsty & you gave me drink. I was a stranger & you welcomed me, naked & you clothed me. I was ill & you comforted me, in prison & you came to visit me." Here's what He'll tell those on His left: "Out of my sight, you condemned, into that everlasting fire prepare for the Devil & his angels. I was hungry & you gave me no food; I was thirsty & you gave me no drink. I was away from home & you gave me no welcome; naked & you gave me no clothing. I was ill & in prison & you did not come to comfort me."

As you can see, people on both sides were surprised to see that Christ the king praised or condemned them on how they treated Him in their past. They certainly would not treat Christ that way because they had never seen Him in person. If anything, they would go out of their way & treat Him much better. However, just listen to what the king said to the people on His right: "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers/sisters, you did it for me." Now, hear what He told the folks on the His left: "I assure you, as often as you neglected to do it to one of these least ones, you neglected to do it for me." He added, "These will go off to eternal punishment & the just to eternal life."

Evidently, Christ would praise or condemn someone depending on how that person had treated the people around him/her, especially the least brothers & sisters. I don't know about you, but those words of wisdom of Jesus are a great reminder & a careful warning to us on how we should treat one another. Unfortunately, we've let our incompetent & heartless leaders mislead us on how we should treat the outcast & the vulnerable of society such as the homeless & the immigrants. They don't come up with a good solution to handle the problem of the homeless & the immigrants, but try to turn the public against those poor & neglected folks. Unfortunately, the public has bought into their rhetoric & turned against the panhandlers & illegal immigrants for example. Have we heard in today's Gospel on how Jesus distinguished between legal & illegal immigrants & told us to treat them differently? No! Have we learned

that Jesus advised us to discriminate against people because of their appearance, skin color, income, social status, religion, or other human biases? No!

Like I said, this Sunday's Gospel is a strong condemnation & indictment of our leaders on the way they have treated the outcast & the vulnerable of society. It's also a great warning to us to change our attitude toward those poor folks & learn to have a compassionate & caring heart in our treatment of the people around us. If we don't, we'll face Christ's harsh punishments on the Last Day. Moreover, we should not blindly follow our incompetent & heartless leaders & buy into their horrible rhetoric. We should listen to & follow the true leader in Christ the king. In case we don't know how blessed we are to have a caring & compassionate leader like Christ, let me share with you a little bit about Him as the following in today's First Reading: "Thus says the Lord God: 'I myself will look after & tend my sheep. As a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep. I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered when it was cloudy & dark. I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest, says the Lord God. The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal... shepherding them rightly.'"

Have you ever seen any human leader who has acted like that to the people that they serve? Can you find any world leader who would behave like our Lord & look after their people like a good shepherd? For Christ would seek out the lost, bind up the injured, & heal the sick. Most of our human leaders would never do those things for their people. Instead, they would put their own ambitions & pit one group against another. They would make empty promises & say anything to get to their powerful positions. They would never roll up their sleeves to help out the misfortunate & make personal sacrifices to uplift the social outcast. On the contrary, look at what our Lord did for us on the Cross & opened the door for us to Heaven & the eternal life. Remember all the great miracles that He did for the sick & the suffering & the wonderful teachings He shared with the lost & the hopeless during His years of ministry? Christ should be the only leader to whom we would listen & commit ourselves in this life.

My dear brothers & sisters, the Feast of Christ the king is a wonderful reminder for us to see how blessed we are to have Jesus Christ as our king. We might be lured by some charming human leader who tries to make empty promises to us & pretends to look out for our welfare. But, the truth is that they don't. Only Jesus would put our benefits before His & willingly sacrifice His own life for our salvation. For He is not only our true leader but also our good shepherd. So, come to Him & follow Him!