

Christ the King A (Nov. 22, 2020-STM: 8:00 & 10:00)

Nikos Kazantzakis tells the story of a monk whose greatest desire was to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Over the course of many years he was able to save and beg the sum of 30 pounds: just enough to take him to his destination. The monk stepped through the gates of the monastery to begin his journey, but no sooner had he done so than he met a beggar, bent low to the ground, picking herbs.

The beggar asked him where he was going. "To the Holy Sepulcher," he replied. By God's grace I shall walk around it three times, kneel and pray, and return home a new and better person."

The beggar looked at him with longing in his eyes. He said, "Give me the 30 pounds for my hungry family, walk around me three times, kneel and pray, and return to your monastery."

The monk paused, scratched the ground with his staff, looked into his heart, and gave the beggar the 30 pounds. He walked around him three times, knelt and prayed. He returned to the monastery a new and better person, for he had seen in the beggar Christ himself, right there at the monastery. —Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Greek Passion* (Simon & Schuster, 1954).

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, today we celebrate Christ the King. As we draw near to the end of the liturgical year and anticipate the beginning of Advent next Sunday, the Church invites us today to focus on the things of eternal life. And what will be one thing on which we will be judged? Well, love. St. John of the Cross said that in the end we will be judged by love. It is really the number one thing that we should worry about. How well we have shown forth the love of Christ? That monk found Christ right in front of him and all he could do was to love that man.

Today we are given a road map for a good way to show forth Christ's love. It is in the practice of the Corporal Works of Mercy. You know them:

- ❖ feed the hungry
- ❖ give drink to the thirsty.
- ❖ clothe the naked.
- ❖ shelter the homeless.
- ❖ visit the sick.
- ❖ visit the imprisoned
- ❖ bury the dead

These are the things of Christ. These are things of eternal life. These are things with which we are to concern ourselves. For in doing these things, we do them unto Christ himself. The Corporal Works of Mercy move us beyond being overly concerned with this thing I call

myself. They move us into the realm of being concerned with the neighbor at our door. In a season of the year when we focus on what we want under our Christmas Tree, today's gospel challenges us to think about the needs of others, to remember the poor and the abandoned, the needy, the prisoner, the sick, the dying.

Today would be a good day to do an examination of conscience using the Corporal Works of Mercy so that we may see if we as individuals and as a parish are doing our part to live in the kingship of Christ. And what is that image of kingship? It is not one of palaces and thrones. It is one of a servant leader. The king the Christ came to be is one of a monarch who looks out for his people, puts them first, serves the needy. So, we must ask ourselves some important questions around the Corporal Works of Mercy because these are the things of sharing in the kingship of Christ and focusing on what is really important in life.

- ❖ Feed the Hungry: are we seeking out ways to provide food for those who are hungry? Do you bring a bag of food each month for the food pantry? Is there someone—maybe a neighbor or relative who is going through a hard time or is sick—for whom you could make a meal? Contribute to your neighborhood PORCH donations. Volunteer at Catholic Charity's food pantry. Volunteer with our community partner, Meals on Wheels.
- ❖ Give drink to the thirsty: Water is clean and plentiful in the US but not everywhere in the world. Don't take it for granted and don't waste it! Provide bottles of water to homeless folks — like those we encounter at stoplights;
- ❖ Clothe the naked: do you make it a practice to give away excess clothes? Look and see if you have more than you need. At this time of year, perhaps go and buy coats for a local coat drive. donate to or volunteer at the Caring and Sharing Center. We are reopening it but many of our past volunteers are older and unable to return. We need new, younger volunteers.
- ❖ Shelter the homeless: Do we give money to the beggar on the street without judging? Can we sacrifice and support our parish financial assistance ministry by providing help for people who cannot pay their rent? Donate socks, gloves or a blanket to a homeless/needy person.
- ❖ Visit the sick: Visiting the sick has gotten a little harder these days but we can reach out via phone, letters or email to those who may be sick or homebound. I read a suggestion recently to offer to assist caregivers of chronically sick family members by grocery shopping or cooking for them so they do not have to risk exposure. Also, we can reach out to health care workers in your community who may be overworked, burdened, or in need of specific support at this time.
- ❖ Visit the imprisoned: we do have a pen-pal ministry for those who are incarcerated that is done in a safe and confidential way through the church.

- ❖ Bury the dead: visit the cemetery or columbarium where your loved ones are. Pray for them. Pray for others who are there. be a part of our Bereavement Correspondence Ministry; send a card (even better, a hand-made one) to someone who just lost a loved one; We have a ministry that normally makes food for funeral receptions. We are not having those now, but we are providing food for bereaved families as needed.
- ❖ A number of years ago, Pope Francis also gave us a new work of mercy: Caring for our Common Home. The Holy Father said: *May the works of mercy also include care for our common home, it requires simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness and makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.* As a parish we are continuing to commit to this as we will be embarking on a project to install solar panels on the roofs of some of our parish buildings.

All of this is rooted in love. Matthew 25 is rooted in love. It is all about Christ showing forth his divine heart in teaching us how to love. It is a matter of not looking so much to what we can get in this world but what we can give.

Today we are challenged to examine our commitment to the gospel of mercy and to moving beyond ourselves in sacrificing and serving those most in need. Who is it that we must walk around three times, kneel and pray? For in the end, we will be judged by love and so we must strive to love well and to love the least among us well. Amen.