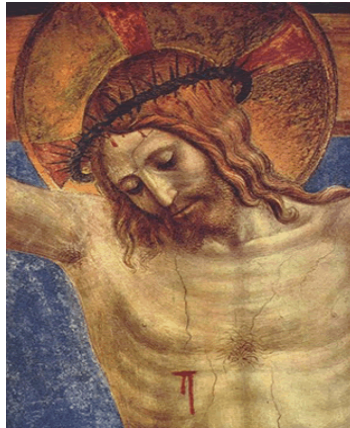


Feast of Christ the King



THE GOSPEL. Matthew 25:31-46

*For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty
and you gave me drink.*

O Jesus,
King of Creation,
you came from glory,
to the rough roads of Galilee;
you took a crown of sharp thorns,
and received a killing cross for your throne

You put on poverty, to be like us,
so that we might be holy
like you are
holy.

So
let us care
for your creation that is ill,
welcome the stranger,
visit him in prison,
feed her and
clothe
her,

and slake
your deepest thirst.

THE FIRST READING. Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

*I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest,
says the Lord*

The sky is dark.

We are
frightened,
scattered.

Come rescue us,
shepherd
king.

Find us
lost,
and
bring us home.

We are
wounded from virus and discord.
And our planet, so wounded.
Bind all our wounds.

And, Lord,
let us act the way you act;
let us bind the wounds
of others.

THE SECOND READING. 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

*For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.
The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

Christ,
do not let death—

lurking,
behind some
attractive
veil—

Be
our
all in all!

Anne Osdieck

Reflection on the Gospel.

The story isn't actually a parable, but a recalling of the final judgment of all the peoples. The whole scene is focused on a lengthy dialogue between the judge, who isn't anyone but the risen Jesus, and two groups of people: those who have eased the suffering of the most needy and those who denied them help.

Throughout the centuries, Christians have found in this fascinating dialogue «the best summary of the Gospel», «the absolute praise of loving solidarity», or «the gravest warning to those who falsely seek refuge in religion». We'll point out the basic assertions.

All men and women, without exception, will be judged by the same criterion. What gives life an unprecedented value isn't one's social condition, or personal talent, or successes logged throughout one's years. What's decisive is the practical love in solidarity with those in need of help.

This love is translated into very concrete deeds. For example, «give food», «give drink», «welcome the immigrant», «visit the sick or imprisoned». The things that are decisive for God aren't religious actions, but these human gestures of help for the needy. They can come out of a believer or from the heart of an agnostic who's concerned about those who suffer.

The group of those who have helped the needy they met in their journey didn't do it for religious motives. They haven't thought about God or Jesus. They simply have sought to alleviate a little the suffering in our world. Now, invited by Jesus, they enter into God's reign as those «blessed by the Father».

Why is it so decisive to help the needy and so condemnable to deny them help? Because, according to the judge, what is done or not done to the needy is done or not done to the very God incarnate in Christ. When we abandon a needy person, we are abandoning God. When we ease someone's suffering, we are doing so for God.

This surprising message gets us all to look on those who suffer. There's no true religion, no progressive politics, no responsible proclamation of human rights if it isn't defending the most needy, easing their suffering and restoring their dignity.

In each person who is suffering, Jesus comes out to meet us, he looks at us, questions us and challenges us. Nothing brings us closer to him than to learn to gaze carefully with compassion on the faces of those who are suffering. There's no place we could recognize more truly the face of Jesus. (Jose Antonio Pagola)

