

Homily Christ the King of the Universe Year A 2023

Together let us praise Jesus Christ, our King and King of the Universe: Alleluia! Alleluia! We have today time to reflect on the kind of king Jesus is for us, what he means to us, how he inspires us, helps us, guides us and challenges us as he does in the gospel today. This reflection will bring you into a stronger relationship with Jesus' love for you. Rather than be overwhelming, it is a warm, comforting, uplifting and reassuring relationship. The more one reflects on this scene of the last judgement that Jesus gives us, the clearer it becomes that we judge ourselves by the way in which we live our lives. The King only directs us to the place we have built for ourselves!

It seems that our ancestors in the faith were impressed that sheep suffer in silence. *They even compared people to sheep and considered suffering in silence to be the sign of a real person. Sheep came to symbolize **honour, virility, and strength*** (John Pilch sj). This is possibly why Jesus chose them for his analogy.

To help, as always, Jesus says it will be our awareness and attentiveness to others and our positive response to help them that is our guiding line; how we live our lives and actively reach out to others who are in particular need. Jesus gives good examples of what this means but there are also many other smaller ways we can do this. Greeting someone we meet with a sense of joy can make a difference to that person and change their outlook for that day. Small common courtesies like standing up to offer your seat to another, opening a door to let others pass through, offer a complement and gratitude for a service rendered by a bus driver, a shop assistant, a host/hostess on a train, bus or plane, a carer, a nurse, a doctor. All these small acts of consideration and recognition fill the world with the small graces that make possible the greater acts performed by others and possibly ourselves. Jesus our king also knows that when we do this and live in this way, we also receive graces that nurture and encourage us to want to do more. Our King, Jesus, discovered this in the help that he gave to others, not just in his healing and teaching but by his very presence that emanated good-will in his love for them. **All of us can do this and do this well.**

It has become clearer that when we speak of the kingdom of God it is planted within all of us, being made in the image of God, and is found in the help and support we give to others in need. In this way the kingdom of God blossoms within us and around us. St Augustine of Hippo described this presence in these words: *"My heart is restless until it rests in you, my God!"*

Rather than dwell on those on the left hand, then, Jesus hopes we will also do our best to help others become attentive, aware and respond to the needs of others, particularly through our example. If we do this really well, perhaps no-one will have to go to the other place????

Father: What did you two do today to help your mother?

Son: I dried the dishes

Daughter: And I helped pick up the pieces.

What do you call a *Pret a Manger* manager who spends too much time helping make sandwiches up front and not enough time back in the office attending to business matters?

Counter productive.