

CHRIST THE KING ... November 23, 2014

In Spanish speaking communities throughout the Americas, the cry being raised today is “Christo Vive” - “Christ Lives,” and “Cristo Reyreina” - “Christ the King reigns!”

Each year on the last Sunday of the liturgical year, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. And as we bring Year A of the liturgical readings to a close - the year of Matthew’s Gospel - we listen to Jesus’ description of the Last Judgement.

Jesus uses the metaphor of a shepherd separating the sheep from the goats. And on what basis are they judged? “Whatsoever you did to the least of my brothers (or sisters), you did to me. Jesus gives a list of actions we are familiar with: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the ill, visiting prisoners.

Some of these actions we do regularly, as we have been doing lately by re-stocking the shelves of our food pantry so that our Friends in Christ Ministry could distribute overflowing Thanksgiving baskets. And we thank all those who have participated. At Mass on Thanksgiving Day we will take up a collection so that we can continue to feed Jesus in the poor and hungry.

And I could go on in describing our parish’s ministries to those in need... However, today I would like to reflect on a broader understanding of Jesus’ mandate: Whatsoever you do to the least, you do to me. Whatsoever. That means that everything we do to another person, we are doing to Jesus.

The end of the liturgical year, and it’s reminder of the Last Judgement, is a good time to do an examination of conscience as to how we have treated others.

What kind of language have we used? Have we been patient, polite, and kind? Do we harbor grudges, racist thoughts, or treat others as being unworthy of our attention?

The current news is filled with reactions to the Presidents’ recent executive order regarding illegal immigrants living in our country. Politics aside, what do we think about this issue in light of Jesus’ admonition to welcome the stranger... Jesus said, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” Do we try to see Jesus in those whose skin is a different hue from ours, or do we jump to prejudicial conclusions about them? And how do we “welcome the strangers” here in this house of God? Do we smile? Do we say “hello”? Do we make room for others - even moving toward the middle of the pew to welcome them? Do we only talk to the people we know and like, or perhaps, talk to no one?

There is one last application of Jesus’ teaching I would like us to consider: bullying.

Bullying frequently happens in schools, at sporting events, or in our neighborhoods, and we often associate it just with the young. However, bullies can be found in any age group and in many places.

I recently met a mother and father whose son was bullied at college because he was gay. His name is Tyler. Tyler felt unwelcome at his church, and feared his parents would not understand. Believing he had no where to turn for help, Tyler took his own life. His parents established the Tyler Clemente Foundation in their son’s memory to share with others what they had learned about the terrible effects of bullying and how important it is to provide safe environments for those who feel they have no one to talk to.

“Whatsoever you do the least of my brother or sisters, you do it to me.” Feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, standing up against bullying... everything we do, we do to Jesus, who calls us to unconditional love and respect, and to leave judgement to him, the Lord and King of the Universe.