

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

11/20/11 Christ the King A

-- There's something just a bit uncomfortable about today's gospel. That's particularly true for those of us who come to Church every week. We hear that when the King of Kings brings us to the judgment seat he won't ask, *Have you gone to worship regularly? Do you pray every day? Did you put in your envelope at Church?*

-- Not that these things aren't important or can be neglected. But these don't seem to be the "bottom line" in Jesus' mind. He will ask, *Have you fed the hungry? Have you clothed the naked? Have you visited the ill, the imprisoned?*

-- In case we think this means heaven is just for social activists, Jesus gives us the true reason for this work: *Whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers, you did it for me.* Jesus is not some disembodied figure we pray to—he is present in the face of those in need.

-- This past week we celebrated the feasts of two saints—both married women—who got this message. Margaret of Scotland lived in the 11th century and Elizabeth of Hungary lived in the 13th century. The first was married to a king and the second to a prominent nobleman.

-- Both were known for their personal service to the poor and for using their resources to help them. Elizabeth, in particular, formed a hospice and cared for the sickest of the sick. Both lived simple lives despite coming from well-to-do backgrounds. They saw Jesus' face in the poor and the sick. They knew the temptation of great riches.

-- Elizabeth died at a very young age, in her 20's. Margaret only lived to be about 46. But the quality of their lives far surpassed the quantity of their years.

-- Today, Jesus is still present in the faces of those in need. He is present at the community meal on Thursday evenings at the Methodist Church downtown. He is present in the faces of the elderly in Fulton Manor and

Heartland. He is present in the cries of children abused by parents or relatives, or those who cry because they are hungry.

-- And the message of the King of Kings brings a challenge to our nation in which almost half the people believe basic health care is a privilege to be earned rather than a basic human right. He counters the notion that private charity is fine but that society as a whole has no obligation to the needy. Helping those in need is not an optional activity.

-- Christ the King confronts us when we begin to believe that the wealth we have inherited or earned is simply ours to do with as we like.

-- The call to share our relative abundance with those who have very little is not simply a matter of being good citizens. It goes to the heart of human dignity, to realizing that we are all made in the image and likeness of God.

-- And that image shines forth in a special way in the hungry, the thirsty, the sick and the imprisoned, precisely because they know they cannot rely on their own resources. In the end, we cannot do so.

-- For we all depend on the grace and mercy of the King of Kings. As we stand before his throne, most of us would probably say that we have fed the hungry....*some* of the time. We have visited the sick... *some* of the time.

-- Christ's face is present in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned, *all* of the time. We cannot and will not solve all the challenges of hunger, lack of water, lack of health care and injustice for the imprisoned throughout the world.

-- But we can do something about those in front of us in need. Christ the King beckons us.... as his face is reflected in them.