

## Bishop's Reflection – Christ the King

Earlier in Matthew's Gospel we heard Jesus say, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt.7: 21). If it isn't clear what the will of the Father is, hopefully there is no more doubt after Jesus concludes his teaching ministry by saying, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."

It is actually quite ironic that many of us still think of sin as something we do (i.e. stealing, killing, adultery); we are far less prone to equate sin with those things we haven't done (i.e. feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger). We are so focused on not committing sin, we fail in what we are called to do, namely, to answer the prayers of those who turn to God in their need and desperation.

Forgetting about ourselves and laying our lives down for others, isn't that what Christ did? He, who in his great mercy, saw the misery of our fallen state; he not only came to die to set us free from sin and death, but spent his life on earth healing our wounds and responding to the needs of those who came to him.

When faced with human suffering, taking today's pandemic and its effects as an example, we might turn to God and ask, "What are you doing to alleviate the suffering of the world?" He who sent his only son to heal the world might well respond, "I've sent you my Son to die for you; I send you my Spirit so that you may be a gift to others too."

And Christ doesn't send us to do it on our own. We draw on the strength of Christ who walks before us, with us and behind us. We draw on the strength of the Saints and on the community of believers who are called to work together to be "the servant of the Lord" (see Luke 1: 38). We draw on the strength of the Holy Spirit, who grants us the gifts and strengthens our resolve.

Notice also that those who looked after the needs of the hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, sick and imprisoned were not looking for a reward. Just like those who did not do it, they asked, "When was it?", suggesting that their deeds came naturally and freely, and were an integral part of who they were.

Over the past month, I have asked the priests of the diocese to begin (or strengthen) some form of regular outreach in their parish. Be it through the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in some of our bigger centers or a more broad-based community effort to address the basic needs, made worse by the pandemic, in smaller communities. I have asked that, in our efforts to identify and address the various needs, we build on existing structures, and build new ones whenever necessary. We should never tire in doing what we can in responding to our brothers and sisters with the care and attention they deserve.

In proclaiming Jesus as King, we give voice to the nature of his kingdom. Is it a kingdom of inequality, where great prosperity and poverty live side by side? Is it a kingdom where the stranger goes unwelcomed, the mourner without consolation, and the sick are left untended, uncared? If we can visualize ourselves as members of his Kingdom in heaven, why not here on Earth? Here where God deigned to dwell with us, taking on our suffering, and inviting us to do likewise in response to the daily requests made on our time, attention and gifts.