

At the moment, there are a considerable number of courtroom dramas on TV. We have seen it play out many times - someone is accused of a crime and that person must now face a judge and jury. As the drama draws to a close, the jury is asked if they have reached a verdict. When the verdict is "not guilty" and the judge says, "You are free to go" everyone goes wild. But we don't give the same attention or joy when the person is found 'guilty' and is led from the courtroom to a future in prison. One day there will be a judgement far greater than "The Practice", 'CSI', or 'Law and Order' or any other TV shows. This will be "**the real judgement**" not just some TV show. This judgement will involve **you and me.**

Today we are left in no doubt that there will be a judgement when Jesus returns. When Jesus comes in all his glory with the angels, he will sit on his throne and all the nations will be judged. On what basis is this judgement carried out? Why are some invited to eternal joy while others are condemned? Whether they went to the right or to the left depended on whether they recognized Jesus. We claim we recognize Jesus, but do we really?

It's true that we see Jesus every time we open the Bible - He reveals himself to us as our loving Savior and friend. We recognize his saving power in the waters of baptism. We see Jesus in the simple bread and wine at Holy Communion - his body and blood - as HE forgives our sin and strengthens us, to face the doubts and dangers of the coming week. We see Jesus as we worship together here in this church, right now; We see Jesus when we take our joy and problems to him in prayer, and when we trust him for help when we are down.

But the judgement story of Jesus goes beyond this and asks whether we have seen him in the face of the hungry and thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and those in prison. The judgement is made on the basis of the compassion, the love, or the lack of it, that we have shown to those whom Jesus calls "the least of my brothers and sisters".

It would seem that the message of this parable is telling us that Christ is mysteriously present to us, in those who need our help. We are called to be there for them, just as God has been there for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus. We are called to show compassion and spring into action for *the least important* just as Christ has had compassion on us in

our times of trial and has sprung into action for us - forgiving, helping and healing us when we needed it the most.

We worship a God who is entangled in the suffering of humanity, in our sufferings and in the suffering of people everywhere. In fact, we worship a God who chooses not to untangle all the knots and problems of our world from the safety of heaven, but invites us all to be partners with him, to join our love to his love, and reach out to the suffering people in our world. This means reaching out to our sick friends, making a meal for a grieving family, welcoming the stranger at church, visiting people we know who are depressed and are doubting God's love and who so desperately need words of reassurance and hope. We must provide good things for our families, and cloth our friends.

We are to see the face of Jesus in the faces all people and to minister to them in the same way Christ has ministered to us in our times of need.

But Jesus' parable goes even further than this. He is talking about *the least important*. People whom others regard as insignificant. People who are easily forgotten. People who are out of sight, so out of mind.

This parable is about how our faith in Jesus and our worship ought to penetrate and be interwoven with the ordinary everyday things of our lives.

We know this and accept it to be true, but I ask you: If we are all doing this – why are there so many people still in need? Why does Catholic Charities have to provide over one million meals per year, or over 15,000 counseling sessions? Why are there still homeless among us and those who just seem lost with no direction?

If the answers we choose do not answer these questions fully– are they really solution or Band-Aids to cover a wound that we wish didn't exist or don't acknowledge because it is not us?

We must look at this from a new perspective. We must look at it from a Christ Perspective. I recently read two things that might help us to understand this Christ perspective: Matthew Kelly's daily inspiration was "You cannot become more like Jesus Christ and at the same time stay as you are." The other was from Facebook that read: "People were created to be loved. Things were created to be used. The reason why the world is in chaos is because things are being loved and people are being used."

We are given today's reading to remind us to take a new look from a different perspective. We all too often rely on our limited human knowledge and thus make the wrong decisions or in many cases we fail to act at all.

We must remember to do what Jesus reminded us to do and it begins by thinking differently. True wisdom is knowing who to Honor. We say we honor God, but do we really? Our baptism makes us all children of God and yet do we honor God by being our brother's keeper? Wisdom is knowing the difference between divine decisions and human decisions. If we followed Jesus' lead, these problems would not exist. We must remember that faith comes most often when you hear God talk -- **but you have to listen**. Have we been listening? I ask you to go home again and re-read the ten commandments. The first part tells us how we are to honor God and the second part tells us how we are to honor each other. I am sure in all of our lives – if we look closely there is room for improvement.

We don't have to look too far to find the people whom Jesus called *the least*. The least are the one billion people who live on less than \$2 a day; the over one billion people who don't have access to affordable and safe water; the over 800 million people who are illiterate. The least that Jesus is talking about are the hundreds of thousands of children who die every year due to preventable diseases; the 30 million people who have lost their homes because of conflict and disasters.

What I have mentioned is just a drop in the ocean of human suffering around our planet, not forgetting *the least* right here in our community.

These are the people we can easily ignore because of their religion or race or life styles. These are the ones who live in different zip codes, if they even have a zip code. They are what we call "the marginalized". Let's change that term and call them our brothers and sisters because they are our family. These are the people that cause us to look the other way. But at the same time, these are the people whom Jesus claims to be among. Or better, it is in the face of these people that we see Jesus.

Who should we care for - and who, if any, should we not care for?
How can we be sure that the truly needy get what they need while those who would suck us dry do not? Or should we even worry about that?

I can't answer these questions for you.
It's something that each of us needs to struggle with on a case by case, day

by day basis. But I can tell you that Christ is all around us in the faces of those who need our help. We must also never let the needy suffer because of the actions of the greedy.

As an individual, we can hardly make a dent in all the human misery in our world, but together we can. We are thankful for the 100 years that Catholic Charities has been providing this critical service. Catholic Charities saw what was wrong over 100 years ago and decided to make a change. I ask you to look around you, see what's wrong and make a change. If you don't see anything wrong, I suggest you change your perspective. Horace Mann said, doing nothing for others is the undoing of ourselves. We must speak loud and use our collective resource to care for all of our brothers and sisters. It is not a request but a command from our Risen Lord. I pray that God continues to bless you all and I also pray that you share your gifts with all your brothers and sisters. May God bless you all.