

Deacon Wadas Homily August 21, 2011

Each year, on the last Sunday of the Church calendar, we celebrate Christ the King, a day on which we are called to reflect on what it means for us to consider our Savior as our King. Kingship, of course, doesn't mean only one thing and therefore can't really be over simplified. It has many sides and meanings, many aspects and dimensions. And the idea of kingship itself has somewhat changed over the years, especially in the last century when many countries abandoned their monarchies. Yet, we don't have to pull a definition of "king" out of the air. We have been provided each year with particular readings as our lens, that help us reflect on a given aspect of our belief of Jesus as our King.

Today we are asked to consider the image of Jesus sitting on His throne, with all His angels at His side. And as He sits there in all His glory, this King has only one thing on His mind --- judging the living and the dead. It's interesting to note that when many of us say that phrase in the creed, we do it without giving it much thought. But when we hear it said in another context, we can often get a chill, as we contemplate our own mortality and take an account of our lives. Most of us probably don't like the idea of being judged and maybe even have some difficulty reconciling a Last Judgment with a GOD Who is Love. Yet this has been a teaching of the Church since its beginning, and seems to be a logical consequence of our freedom. If we are free to choose GOD, we must be free to reject Him. If we are free to receive His grace, we must be free to sort of hold it at bay. If we are free to dine at the Banquet in Heaven, we must be free to reject the invitation. Freedom, which is likely one of our most precious gifts,

and one which conforms us to the GOD who fashioned us, in His own likeness, is a gift which we can always misuse. We only have to consider the story of Adam and Eve and the Fall to realize that.

While I imagine that most of us approach the idea of GOD judging us with some trepidation, my guess is that the more we reflect upon it, the more we are able to be at peace with it.

The reason is simple.

Most of us haven't done too many terrible things. Most of us are not murderers.

Most of us don't go through life trying to inflict pain and misery on others.

And we don't wake up every morning asking ourselves, "I wonder what helpless person I can rip-off today?" the truth is, our failings [for the most part] hurt people in small ways, in ways that likely don't severely damage our relationship with GOD.

And so I imagine that many of us are confident enough of GOD's love and mercy, and confident enough, of our conduct in this life, to NOT really feel that we have too much to worry about.

Then we get a Gospel passage such as the one we heard proclaimed, the story about the Son of Man separating the sheep from the goats. The first half isn't the problem. Do good things and good things will happen, that seems to be the message --- not that we are able to earn our way into Heaven. That's not possible. However, the good that we do does provide some evidence of our

openness to GOD's grace, some outward evidence that we are responding to the GOD dwelling within us and that we are trying to take our discipleship seriously. When we measure ourselves

this way, most of us probably measure up to some degree that is reasonable.

It's the second half that is the problem --- because when we measure ourselves against this standard, many of us [myself included] fall far short. I know that I can often be a little like those in the story asking, "When did I see you hungry, thirsty, naked, ill, or in prison and not help you?" You see there is a part of me that can very easily see the merit in the good things that I do, but also part of me that has a hard time seeing the sinfulness

of the things I don't do. The "sins of omission" that Sr. Cunegunda taught me as a child. Why --- I even include it as part of my Act of Contrition.

I clearly understand the value of doing good things, but don't assign the same opposite value when thinking about the missed opportunities in my life. The times when GOD presents me with an opportunity to make a difference [even a small one] and I choose to look the other way.

The fact that I don't see "sins of commission" and "sins of omission" in the same way, probably means that I am failing most in my spiritual life in the things I am not doing. And so maybe today is a wake-up call that I need, that blast of cold air that will sober me up to the deepest realities of who I am as a child of GOD and as a disciple of Jesus.

It's as if GOD is trying to tell us today, "Don't kid yourselves, doing a few good things does not mean that you are living as I

created you to be [and died for you to be.] Being "fully human" and "fully alive" is much more than that. I want more for you,

and the world needs more from you. Are you willing to give Me everything you have, everything I have given you?"

Today another Church year comes to a close. It provides us with the perfect opportunity to look back over the past 12 months and examine not only the good and bad we have done but especially the opportunities that passed us by.

Who needed me this past year, yet didn't receive the love that they longed for and deserved?

Who in my life was sad or lonely, yet got no comfort from me?

Who in my life hungered for a little attention and affirmation, yet instead received indifference, apathy and disregard?

Who cried out to anyone who would listen only to have their pleas fall on deaf ears?

Who stood in plain view of me, in need of so many things --- and yet whom I treated as practically invisible?

We cannot underestimate the seriousness of helping when an opportunity presents itself. Today's readings make that perfectly clear. But we should also never underestimate GOD's great love and mercy -- a love that knows no bounds and the infinite mercy

that our GOD is willing to shower upon us every time we stumble, every time we fail, every time we sin.

So as we honestly examine our faithfulness [or the lack of] over the past year, let us be sure to sincerely and humbly ask for GOD's forgiveness, believe that it is so, and pledge to make whatever changes need to be made in order to conform our lives more perfectly to that of our Christ the King.