

"I was hungry and you gave me no food..."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, there was an old, Irish legend. It goes back to when kings ruled Ireland. It came to be that a certain, reigning king had no children to succeed him on the throne. So, he had signs posted in all the villages, towns, and cities of his kingdom inviting qualified, young men to apply for the position through an interview with the king himself.

2 qualifications were stressed: the applicant must have...

a deep love for God and **for his neighbor**

The legend centers on a young man, who saw one of the signs. He knew he had a deep love for God and for his neighbor. And he felt a kind of 'inner voice' telling him to apply for the interview. **BUT**...and there's that proverbial **BUT** in life, the young man was so poor that he didn't have any decent clothes to wear to the interview. Nor did he have money to buy provisions for the long journey to the king's castle.

So, the young man prayed over the matter. He finally decided to beg for the clothes and the provisions he needed. When everything was ready, he set out. After a month of travel, one day the young man, at long last, caught sight of the king's castle. It sat on a high hill, off in the distance.

At about the same time, he also caught sight of a poor, old beggar-man, sitting by the side of the road. He held out both of his hands, pleading for help:

"I am hungry and cold," he said in a weak voice.

"Could you give me something warm to wear and something nourishing to eat?"

The young man, moved by the sight of the beggar, stripped off his warm, outer clothes and exchanged them for the tattered, old coat of the beggar. He gave the beggar most of the provisions he carried for his return journey.

Then, with great uncertainty, he walked on to the castle ...in tattered clothes ...and ...without enough food for his return trip.

When the young man arrived at the castle, guards met him at the gate. They took him to the visitors' area. After a long wait, the young man was led-in to see the king.

He bowed low before the throne. When he straightened up, he could hardly believe his eyes. He said to the king:

"I know you. You were the beggar-man beside the road!"

"That's right," said the king.

"Why did you do this to me?" asked the young man.

"I had to find out for myself," said the king, **"if you really did love God and neighbor."**

With that, he walked down the throne steps, embraced the young man, and whispered into his ear: **"Welcome home, my son!"**



Even though this is a fictitious story, its point is absolutely valid.

What, exactly, is its valid point, you ask.

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

It's the same point today's readings make, especially the gospel, which I just read to you from Mt. The point's this: You & I will be judged at the end of life on how well we served Christ the King in the least of our brothers and sisters.

Recall Our Lord's words:

**"When I was hungry...thirsty...naked...a stranger...ill & in prison....
...Whatever you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me."**

To make our Lord's words a little more concrete...

Once upon a time, a high school teacher asked her students this question:

"When was the last time you helped someone in need?"

Here's just 3 students' responses:

1st **"When I was on the Roosevelt Road bus Friday, a man, carrying several, bulky boxes got on. I offered him my seat. He declined, but asked me if I would hold some of his boxes for him. I did, and he was very thankful."**

2nd **"About two weeks ago, I was sitting on a bus next to a crazy lady. She wanted someone to talk to, so I treated her kindly and listened to her."**

3rd **"I can't remember when I helped someone I didn't know. I feel really bad about that. If it's so long ago that I can't remember, maybe there's something wrong with me. I mean, maybe ...I've closed my eyes ...to needy people."**

We might ask ourselves the same question: **When was the last time we helped someone needy?**

And, what would our answer be; like the first two or would our answer be like the third student, who couldn't remember the last time he'd helped someone who needed help?

What about helping members of our own family? When was the last time we volunteered to help them with something?

What about our neighbors or people in our parish? When was the last time we went out of our way to help them when they were in need?

Why don't we open our hearts to the poor, the lonely, the needy...regardless of who they are or where they live?

What might we do to change this right now, beginning today?

Today brings a close to the liturgical year of the Church. Today's message is so important because it concerns what we will be judged on when we die. Specifically, we will be judged on how well we served Christ the King ...in the least important among us.

I close with this prayer:

**"The parish priest climbed up high
In the church steeple,
To be nearer God,
So he might hand His word down to his people....
He cried out from the steeple:
'Where art thou, Lord?'
And the Lord replied,
'Go down again...
For I dwell among the people.' "**

May our all-knowing, all-loving, all-present Abba-God bless you...

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.