

CHRIST THE KING (A)

A King who had no heir to succeed him posted a notice inviting young men to come along with a view to succeeding him as King. The two qualifications for the post were love of God and neighbour. A poor peasant boy decided to apply. He worked hard, bought some new clothes, and headed off to the interview. He was half way there, however, when he met a poor beggar on the road, who was shivering with the cold. The young man felt so sorry for him that he exchanged his new clothes with him. So he was back in rags again. However, the young man felt that, having come this far, he might as well finish the journey. He arrived at the palace, and despite the sneers and jibes of the courtiers, he was finally admitted into the presence of the king. Imagine his amazement to see that the king was the old beggar-man he had met on the road, and he was actually wearing the new clothes the young man had given him. The king got down from his throne, embraced the young man, and said, 'Welcome my son, you shall inherit my kingdom'.

Mother Theresa had written over the beds of her dying patients: 'this is the body of Christ'. His body was broken for us on the Cross. So at Mass when we come up to receive Him in Holy Communion, I wonder are we sufficiently aware of human brokenness in our in our families, in our city, in our world. How we respond to this brokenness is the acid test of our Christianity. In helping anyone in need, it is the Christ in us who is recognising the Christ in them. I suppose we live in a society where the value of a person tends to be assessed on how useful or efficient they are or how much they contribute materially to our society leaving little room for those who fall short in this regard. People are judged not on what they are but on what they have, what they do, what they produce. This is

why euthanasia is becoming more appealing to the less scrupulous by the day. A characteristic of present day culture is unchecked individualism, leaving little room for the communal dimension. The weak and the vulnerable are left behind and yet it is in how we pick up on their situation that we will ultimately be judged. But in a strange sort of way the pandemic is bringing out the best of us in this regard. Sometimes we have to learn the hard way.

Jesus is not impressed, however, by acts of charity done for show. In God's Kingdom its small unseen actions done with a good heart which speak the loudest. St Theresa said that if we go through life without anyone noticing our good actions, so much the better. So, do we recognise Christ in the vulnerable members of our human family, the less capable, the unborn baby, the long term sick, those bullied at work or at school, those with mental or emotional problems? We're here in this world to help each other and the happiest people are those who do.

So the message of this, the last Sunday of the liturgical Year, is probably the most important. Those who will stand at the Lord's right hand on the Day of Judgment will be the ones who have taken today's gospel seriously and acted accordingly. Eternal Life is theirs.