

**DOING THE RIGHT THING**  
**Christ the King, November 22, 2020**  
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Have you ever *not* done something and felt a little guilty about it afterwards? Maybe try to rationalize that guilt away? I felt this way just last week.

Diane and I were doing our usual weekend grocery shopping. We had loaded the car and we were headed out of the Walmart parking lot when I saw him... you know... *that* guy with the cardboard sign sitting in the median looking for a handout, a donation, a gift. Part of me wanted to read his crudely made sign... you know, out of curiosity... perhaps it read “homeless” or “hungry” or maybe “veteran, please help.” I watched the timing of the cars in front of me... I didn’t want to be next to him, waiting to turn... that’s always so awkward... pretending not to see him but, luckily, I was able to scoot into my lane and avoid the whole situation. I told myself that he was probably one of those professional panhandlers that I seen on TV... the ones who collect donations then go to an expensive home in a fancy car. He probably

wasn't hungry or homeless or even a veteran.... least that's what I told myself to make myself feel better. Have you ever felt this way... not helping when your heart said you should and being privately embarrassed about it afterwards, just as I was?

Today we celebrate Christ the King. It is the last day of our liturgical year and Matthew brings us Christ's final discourse on the end times which follows the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, and the "tale of talents."

Matthew opens with a descriptive scene of Jesus coming in the Glory of God with angels... not one or two, but all the angels. He sits upon a glorious throne and the nations are assembled before him. From this, we turn to sheep and goats... the sheep are lead to the favored right and the goats to left. Why does Jesus favor the sheep over the goats... why does one inherit the heavenly kingdom while the other is punished?

Goats are strong-willed, independent creatures. They attack animals that mean to harm the herd. The alpha male leads. Goats

don't graze they browse... eating whatever fits their fancy. They have a spirit of defiance and self-will.

Sheep, on the other hand, are defenseless and are dependent upon their shepherd to lead them, even responding to the sound of his voice. If they wander, the shepherd will go out and rescue them bringing them back to the safety of the flock... when separated from their shepherd and their flock, sheep are nervous and vulnerable.

Before modern genic manipulation, it's said that the goats and sheep of Jesus' time we're almost identical. So, it took the shepherd's keen eye to sort out the two. It's easy to see the metaphor Jesus is using to distinguish those who follow, heed and need the shepherd to guide and protect them versus the strong-willed, self-centered, independent who lives for self.

Matthew now vividly illustrates how we are to care for our fellow brothers and sisters... and in doing so, do for Christ himself. Notice that the verses, the words, are repeated not once, not twice but four times. Repetition is meant to emphasize importance... four times we hear "I

was hungry, I was thirsty, I was a stranger, I was naked, I was in prison.” And – astonishingly – the righteous, the sheep, don’t even realize what they’ve been doing asking, “Lord, when did we see you...” And, Jesus answers with that beautiful response “Whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

I believe we’re all very well aware of who the marginalized are in our society, those on the fringes who are often forgotten... sometimes labeled “the icky ones of society.” Jesus stresses to us, four times no less, that in the downtrodden, the sad, the homeless and in the hungry we find Christ for these are the very people that need our help the most.

I would like to enlarge that circle to say *whenever* we help *anyone* that is in need, we help Christ. Sure, we can look to the saints, to those with deep pockets, even those who are retired and seem to have endless free time as those who can or should be taking care of the needy. But Jesus warns us, on the judgement day, we shall be judged

by how we've treated one another and how we've helped those less fortunate than us.

Yes, we can write checks, do a little more here or a little more there but Jesus invites us to get a little skin in the game... to do more than be on the fringes helping those on the fringes. What do I mean by that? Simple things... for example, did you know out of five parishes we still don't have enough volunteers to support and encourage our dozen or so confirmation candidates? Our parishes beg for readers, Eucharistic ministers, musicians and parish council members. Society begs us to help us teach English as a second language, to work at a food bank, serve food at a shelter, to donate clothing. Our fellow human beings beg us to visit at the nursing home, at the prison or to the shut-in. We are meant, built, created to help one another, to find joy in lifting up another soul... not so that someone can see and compliment us but out of the dignity, respect and love of one created in the image of God. These are what we call the "corporal works of mercy."

I share with you these words from Mother Teresa: “In order to help us deserve heaven, Christ set a condition: that, at the moment of death you and I, whoever we might have been and wherever we have lived, Christians and non-Christians alike, every human being who has been created by the loving hand of God in his own image shall stand in his presence and be judged according to what we have been for the poor, what we have done for them... Christ said, ‘I was hungry and you gave me food.’ He was hungry not only for bread but for the understanding-love of being loved, of being known, of being someone to someone. He was naked not only of clothing but of human dignity and of respect, through the injustice that is done to the poor, who are looked down upon simply because they are poor. He was disposed not only of a house made of bricks but because of the dispossession of those who are locked up, of those who are unwanted and unloved, of those who walk through the world with no one to care for them... Do we go out to meet those”? Do we know them? Do we try to find them?”

We can help our brothers and sisters who need it... it need not be on the scale of the work accomplished by Mother Teresa... it can be a small donation, a gesture, a note, a kind word. A donation of time towards the person who begs for your company with their eyes. Doing the right thing... that tug on your heart string that says I can make a difference right here and right now. It need not be grand... start small and accomplish great things! Start each day not as a goat but as a sheep.