

Holiness and Community

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle A

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Matthew 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are my Savior and Redeemer. I place all my hope and trust in your divine heart. United to you, all things are possible — even my holiness. With childlike faith and trusting you without limits, I know that I will experience the triumph of your grace in my life. I wish to grow in holiness today, so that I will love you, my God, above all else. Amen.

Petition: Lord, help me to appreciate that growth in holiness occurs within a Christian community.

1. Holiness is Essentially Seeking the Good of Others: The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that "charity is the soul of the holiness to which all are called: it 'governs, shapes and perfects all the means of sanctification.'" And quoting St. Therese of Lisieux, it reminds us:

If the Church was a body composed of different members, it couldn't lack the noblest of all; it must have a heart, and a heart burning with love. And I realized that this love alone was the true motive force which enabled the other members of the Church to act; if it ceased to function, the apostles would forget to preach the Gospel, the martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 826).

In today's Gospel Jesus grants eternal life to those who did good to others, whom he identifies as his very self. Contrariwise, he sends to eternal damnation those who did nothing to help others, whom he identifies as his very self.

2. Holiness Necessarily Entails a Dedication to the Christian Mission: Hand-in-hand with genuine charity is our sense of Christian mission. There is no genuine holiness apart from a radical orientation toward the spiritual and material good of others. In a word: there is no holiness without mission. As Pope Saint John Paul II reminds us:

The universal call to holiness is closely linked to the universal call to mission. Every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission. This was the earnest desire of the [Second Vatican] Council, which hoped to be able "to enlighten all people with the brightness of Christ, which gleams over the face of the Church, by preaching the Gospel to every creature." The Church's missionary spirituality is a journey toward holiness ... (Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio, 90).

Our times cry out for this kind of holiness, one enflamed by the ardent determination to bring as many of our brothers and sisters as possible to Christ.

3. Holiness Occurs Within the Christian Community: This universal call to holiness and mission is meant to be fostered within the context of a Christian community. We are meant to spur each other on by our devotion, good example, generosity and encouragement.

Dear brothers and sisters: let us remember the missionary enthusiasm of the first Christian communities. Despite the limited means of travel and communication in those times, the proclamation of the Gospel quickly reached the ends of the earth. And this was the religion of a man who had died on a cross, 'a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles'! (I Corinthians 1:23). Underlying this missionary dynamism was the holiness of the first Christians and the first communities (Pope Saint John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio, 90).

Do I strive to build up my family and Christian community with missionary awareness? Do I value the example and help I receive, and do I strive to help others along this same path of holiness?

Conversation with Christ: Lord, make my holiness real. Let it be characterized by a heartfelt, growing and universal love for all people. Let my heart beat in unison with yours. Open my eyes to all the good that I can do for my brothers and sisters, and don't allow me to walk away from any opportunity to show this world your love. Amen.

Resolution: I will take some time today to examine my conscience and honestly assess the spontaneity, depth and extension of my charity towards others, especially those I supposedly love the most.