

Homily for November 22, 2020 – The Feast of Christ the King:

Different languages have different sentence structures. But, I think what I am about to suggest is accurate enough for this homily.

When we use analogies, it is important to notice the subject and object within the sentence. For instance; when we say, “A is B,” the word “is” does not mean the mathematical “equals” sign. In Logic: “A equals B” is the same things as “B equals A.” In a sentence, “A is B” is not the same thing as saying “B is A.”

When Jesus says “I am the vine,” that is not the same thing as Him saying, “The vine is me.” The word order is important. The second noun informs us about the first.

“I am the vine,” means that just as the branches of a vine stay alive by being connected to the vine, so we disciples can only survive if we remain attached to Jesus.

“The vine is me,” means that when we look at Christ, we are to think of grapes, or ivy. We do not go around to every vine we see and say, Hi Jesus!”

The word after “is” has the purpose of telling us something about Jesus. When Jesus identifies Himself with something (the vine, the Good Shepherd, The Light of the World), there are qualities in that “something” which Jesus wants us to see in Him. That is what is happening when He says, “I am this.”

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There are two main times in which Christ says, “This is me.” There are two main times in which He identifies something with Himself. And when He does, members of the Church have always run after those things.

The first is at the Last Supper. He took bread and said, “This is my Body.” Then He took a cup of wine and said, “This is my blood.” Christ’s Body and Blood inform us as to how we are to understand this bread and this cup. After those words are said, we can only grasp what they are by looking to Jesus; who He is and what He is and what He does on Good Friday.

And so we run to meet Him at Mass and in Communion. For this is Him. We run to meet Him where He says He is.

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The Second time Jesus say “this is me,” the second time Christ identifies something with Himself, the second time He tells us that the way to understand something is to look to Him - is found in today’s Gospel Parable.

“...whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

And just like the Eucharist, throughout history the Faithful have run to the hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, sick, and imprisoned – and attended to their needs. They have run to Find Jesus where He said He is.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta said of caring for the poor in India that her sisters spend the early part of the day looking at Christ in the Eucharist, and then are able to see Christ in the poor and dying in the streets and attend to His needs, Jesus’ needs.

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As one priest said, “Notably, there is no mention in the parable of anyone doing evil; rather, the parable speaks of neglect. We are often guilty of neglect, of not being moved by the needs of others or of failing to help even [when] we notice others’ needs.”

Like the parable in Luke’s gospel of the Rich Man who recognized the poor beggar Lazarus, but neglected him.

In our acts of contrition, we often mention “what I have failed to do.” They are called, “Sins of Omission.”

Sometimes we neglect because we have never thought about it. Sometimes we neglect out of cold-heartedness or indifference. And in response to this, we are not just told God commands us to help; although that should be enough of a reason.

Our Lord goes further. He makes it desirable. If we love Christ, how can we not be moved by His instruction that the least of these are His brothers and sisters? And what we do we are in fact doing for Him.

May we pray every day for our eyes to be open to see those who are hungry, thirsty, imprisoned, sick, and without shelter. May we pray for discernment every day to know who we have labelled as “the least” in our estimation. May we ask God for help when we are hesitant to offer help to those in need.

And may more and more people every day discover that it is Christ Himself who comes to them in the persons of those in need.