

Homily for the Feast of Christ, the King 11/22/20

Today we celebrate the Feast of Christ, the King.

During this last week of the liturgical year we will be celebrating Thanksgiving. But it will be a different holiday for us as we are not able to gather as a family and join with friends because of the coronavirus. During this holiday week may the Lord bless our nation and may we soon see an end to this scourge of disease.

In preparing for the Feast of Christ, the King I came across a story about a king that may help us appreciate God's call to be generous to the poor and needy as we celebrate Thanksgiving.

Here it is. There once was a king who lived in a far-distant land. He had a rich kingdom and was deeply loved and respected by all for his wisdom and fairness. It seemed he had everything he wanted but he had no heir to whom he could leave his kingdom and all its wealth. So, he came up with a plan. He would invite young men from all over his land to be interviewed for the job. He then sent out notices to all of his countrymen.

Far away in a tiny village, a poor young man heard about the king's plan. He hoped he could be the king's son. So he worked and slaved day and night to earn enough money to buy the food he would need to make the trip and some new clothes for his meeting with the king. Finally, after weeks of work and difficult travel, he found himself outside the king's castle.

Sitting by the gate of the castle was a filthy beggar dressed in dirty rags, crouched in the dust of the road. "*Have pity on me and help me*" the beggar cried. The young man looked down on the beggar and his heart was moved to pity for him. He gave the beggar his new clothes he had worked so hard to buy. And he also gave him the money he had saved for his trip home. The beggar was overjoyed and thanked the man for his generous heart and kindness. But now his giving heart was fearful and as he looked down at the clothes he exchanged with the beggar. Yet he, felt he should still go into the castle to see the king. "*I've come too far to let anything stop me now,*" he thought. He was escorted into the palace and led to the king's room. As the doors opened before him, the young man stepped into the presence of the king. There seated on the throne, was the beggar wearing the clothes the

young man had given him. The king looked at the shocked visitor, threw open his arms and exclaimed, "Welcome, my son!" This old story illustrates Jesus's teaching that He shares with us in today's Gospel: "*Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do unto Me.*"

Yes, we have all heard versions of God's call for our generosity in countless stories like this one. We may have become so accustomed to the theme of this story that we can often anticipate the ending. But there is a difference between these old stories and real life. In our everyday encounters with those in need, we don't see the "big reveal" at the end. We only see the poor in their poverty or the sick in their illness. Mother Teresa called what we see with our eyes the "disguise that covers Christ." She was able, with God's grace to see beyond the disguise and to see each person as another Christ. What Mother Teresa did – to bring care and compassion to our least brothers and sisters is what we are called to do. Sharing Christ's love with others is how we are called to live our faith.

Yes, we celebrate Thanksgiving this week may we remember as we celebrate, the call of today's Gospel. Have a great holiday!