



In 1972, I, along with my classmates, made a retreat, before we professed our perpetual vows as Redemptorists. There were ten of making this retreat. We had a very moving prayer service in which, after a period of prayer and a homily, we passed a *Bible* from one person to another. Each of us, when it was his turn to hold the *Bible*, was invited to name a quote or story from the *Word of God* that was instrumental in bringing us to dedicate our lives to God as vowed religious. I remember that I chose *Mathew 25*, the text which we have just read as our *Gospel* on the Feast of Christ the King. Christ tells us that we will be judged on how we treated one another, especially the poor and the weak. This scripture impacted me for many years since I wanted to get the heaven. I felt that the best way for me to live this Gospel of helping others was by becoming a priest. I could help other people know God, forgive sins in his name, comfort the sick and the dying, and baptize infants into the faith.

Now, as a priest for 42 years, I believe I will have people at the last judgment stand up and testify on my behalf. *Father visited me when I was sick, Father baptized me as an infant, Father was kind to me when my husband died, Father once gave a sermon that helped me.* I am very consoled by these thoughts. At the same time, I think of the people might testify against me: *that priest lost his temper with me, when I was lying on the street he passed me without noticing me, he spent money on things he did not need when I was desperate for a few dollars, he made a remark that really hurt my feelings, he gossiped about me.* I must confess these thoughts scare me for two reasons: 1) they are all true 2) I am not sure if I can ever do all the right things all the time. I am consoled by the great mercy of God and the knowledge of his love for sinners. Still, I do find the text of *Matthew 25* about our being judged on how we treated one another

to be intimidating. It has been 45 years since I chose this *Gospel text* as the most important in the choices I made in my life.

Today, if I were asked to be part of the same prayer service, I think I would be less quick to choose those verses that I did as a 22-year-old man. If I had to pick a scripture quote that would describe as my guiding words, my choice now would be: *Mathew 10 42: And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.* I am overwhelmed with the thought of trying to feed every hungry person, to clothe every naked person, to visit every sick person as the Gospel challenges us to do. The words of Jesus that anyone who gives even a cup of cold water to someone I need will be rewarded are very comforting to me. I think I can do that. I can do a few kind generous deeds a day and that is a gift of grace that I pray for daily.

This Gospel vividly reminds each of that that we will one day stand before God and give an account of our life. This can be a very frightening thought. Granted many people today pay little attention to the idea of being judged by God at the end of their lives. Bring such a topic up and you will be told, to change the subject. I recall that the late Howard Cosell, the sports announcer who spoke like he was God on all topics, spoke a about a former player, who had died, I can't remember who it was. Cosell announced his death with these words: *his death was inevitable.* This quote became a source of humor since everyone's death is inevitable even though I often find myself saying, *If I die, I want this said or that hymn played.* The word *if* seems to suggest that it is in doubt and I may the only person in history not to die.

Today Gospel moves us into death and judgment. Jesus himself sweated blood the night before he died so fear of death is no sin and something that is very human. The words of Jesus today tell us we will die and will be judged on how we have treated each other. Sobering words to hear. The closing words of the Catholic wake service are: *Blessed are those who have died in the Lord. Let them rest from their labors for their good deeds go with them. Although is easy to focus on our faults,* I would believe that all of you have done far more good deeds life than sinful ones. We trust in our good deeds, but we take the greatest hope in the fact that have been loved and saved by the death of our Lord. Perhaps, the most popular verse in the Bible is the following: *God so loved that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him may not die but have eternal life.*