

Homily –Christ our King – Matt 25 : 31-46

Two broad themes emerge from our readings today- the issues of governance and allegiance; and issues of Christian pastoral care.

This is the last week of Ordinary time in year A of our liturgical cycle . Interestingly it was only in 1925 that the church gave this Sunday the title of “Christ – the King” and it was done by the Pope at the time, in response to the rise of fascist and nazi leaders in Europe, in the hope that people would see Christ as their true leader. Indeed the Pope wanted to remind people that that the model for governance and leadership should be based more on “shepherd” or “servant” leadership of Jesus, rather than the authoritarian model that others were espousing.

Certainly for us in Australia today , we have a system of governance that broadly makes provision for benevolent leadership. Clearly we would desire that our public and community leaders display in practice the care for people and for human rights that Jesus espoused . At the same time we must realize that achieving and maintaining a “ people centred” approach in governance, has always been a struggle, with various forces of darkness showing alternative positions .

But we know that every human leader can succumb to pressure and that is why our primary loyalty and allegiance must always be to Christ and his values . I get somewhat bemused that politicians get occasional opportunities for a “conscience” vote . Really everything we do in life must be done in the good conscience that Gods Spirit gives and convicts us of. Even for those of us in government service we must echo the words of St Thomas More – we can be the Kings good servant, but Gods first .

In Jesus we see a model of kingship par excellence. Todays readings remind us specifically of the caring role that Jesus has modelled for us. The prophet Ezekiel announces that the Lord is like a shepherd who cares for his sheep, keeping them all in view , and when needed , looks for the lost , bandages the wounded, and makes the weak strong . The shepherds (23rd) psalm echoes this .

The gospel reading imagines Judgement day, where Jesus warns us that we will come before our King and asked to give account of how we fed the hungry , gave drink to the thirsty , clothed the naked, or visited the sick or in prison. He does not mention whether he has any interest in what fame or fortune we have achieved. Jesus says that in so much as we performed or neglected these ministries to the needy , we did so to him . That must cause us to reflect on how we have shown practical concern and assistance for those in need . Indeed Jesus make the point so strongly, he warns of eternal punishment for those who neglect these acts of charity, and that we must grasp these actions as fundamental tasks to be carried out in the Christian life.

Im sure we al are concerned for the needy . But I know it s not easy to balance the many demands we have in life. We all have to different degrees, time, talent and/or treasure, than can be put towards living out Jesus care for the needy, but we need to choose do something practical .

I was particularly challenged during the recent week , which had more than its normal share of crises to attend to, when I became aware on Wednesday that one of the soldiers

recently wounded in Afghanistan had been transferred to a private hospital in Brisbane. I was unsure what visits he may have had , and thought I should go to see him . I had so many other tasks to do , and people to see, but I recalled this scripture . I wasn't sure if he would welcome me, or be in a position to talk, and there was likely to be a hassle finding a carpark. I could have easily put the thought of visiting him aside and hoped that someone else would. But the spirit moved my conscience, that to visit him now , was what Jesus would do. I set off , miraculously got a park right in front of the hospital door, and found the soldier was overwhelmed to see me visit him. He is badly banged up with two major gunshot wounds , but had a smile from ear to ear throughout the time I was with him. I had many other urgent things needing attention this week , but this clearly was Jesus expectation for me . We have some really clear guidance from Jesus in the scripture today on what he wants us to do in life – visit the sick and imprisoned ; feed the hungry; welcome the stranger . But we have to choose to attend to these with our time or talent or treasure.

All of us have been charitable in various ways individually, and our parish also has been very generous , especially to our near neighbours in the Pacific and East Timor. The Archdiocese has as well . This week the Archdiocese has also been celebrating Centacare week, and may we give God thanks for the more than 3000 volunteer and paid staff of Centacare , who ministered to over 100,000 needy people this last year . Thank you to Peter Sellwood (one of our parishioners) for leading this great ministry in the Archdiocese.

During the week I was invited to special morning tea celebrating Centacare's contribution – not just to our church, but to the wider community in SE Qld . They provide the widest range of services from age care to disability to relationship counseling to chaplaincies to prisons, hospitals and the services . I was interested to find they now assist in employment placement . We can really be proud of their contribution . We can also make a contribution to them by offering our assistance . My wife Lynne serves at the Centacare Respite centre at Enoggera . They and other centres are frequently shortstaffed and in need of volunteer assistance . It might be something as simple as collecting an aged person and taking them to the doctor or doing the shopping for them . Its one of the many ways we can live out Jesus expectation that we care for those in need . Of course I would also like to thank and herald and commend the work of St Vincent de Paul society in this area. You are angels of mercy .

In ending this Liturgical year, and preparing for the next during Advent , may we take time to reflect how we have used our time, treasure or talents to care for those in need, and make resolution to correct any shortcomings we may have made . We will all be in need at some points in our lives. May we hope that the standard people use to help us , will be at least the same as what we have used for others in their need.