

Solemnity of Christ the King
November 26, 2017

The gospel could not be more explicit than it is today. It is black and white, clear and simple. Our very salvation depends on how we treat the poor. Four times it is repeated that how we treat the hungry or thirsty, the stranger or homeless those who have few clothes, those who are ill and those who are imprisoned will determine our eternal destiny.

Here at Sacred Heart and St. Alexander's there are many ways in which we attend to the poor. Our missionary efforts in Bolivia and Peru, our Catholic schools, Catholic charities, Catholic relief services, the neighborhood table, our missionary parishes, and so forth. At present we are gathering together supplies to send out Christmas baskets to needy families in the area.

The challenge is always there. Every day we are confronted with situations in which we can help or hinder the poor. Basically, the gospel today is calling us to put on the mind and heart of God. Pick out the most disadvantaged person that you know and extend to them an expression of love and understanding.

When you do this, you will find that you are the one who is receiving as well as giving.

Having said all this, it is important that we are judicious in our giving so that we enable and not disable those who are disadvantaged. An easy example would be our prison population. They are very invisible to the community and yet they are some of the most impoverished of all our neighbors. They're in jail for a reason. Drugs or alcohol are almost always a big part of the problem. I submit that the deepest need of our most desperate people is a spiritual need. When someone takes drugs it is an artificial attempt to spiritually regenerate themselves.

So it is with all of us. We need to be invigorated by reigniting the fire of our inner life. Spiritual poverty is at the root of all poverty. It is a veritable hell to live any other way than embracing the heart and mind of God.

It's easy for us to be judgmental and think that we are the King of the universe. The gospel calls us to divest ourselves of cynicism and hard feelings and use all the good things that we have to bring about new hope and joy.

In the 1970s I remember reading in a Time Magazine article which designated Bolivia as one of the famine belts of the world. Now, you can go there and see soy bean fields that extend to the horizon.

I remember going to a Mennonite farmer to help us build a water tank for this small village. He had an old combine that had broken down. He had the entire machine jacked up and sitting on railroad ties. He had to pull the transmission out of the bottom of the machine. A couple weeks later I came back to see about the tank, which he had made, and the combine was out in the field harvesting wheat. He had made the part and fix the transmission.

It is always a joy when people rise from the ashes of disaster. And it is of particular joy when we have been a part of that resurrection. Underneath it all it is not a matter of money or machines. Rather, it is a matter of the heart. Put on the mind and heart of God for what we do to the least of our brothers and sisters, we do for God.

And remember, it is not the people of Bolivia that were talking about. We can't begin to help people far away unless we first show mercy and love to the people in our immediate circle. The one who sits across from us at the kitchen table, or a co-worker, or a fellow classmate. These are the ones we must nurture and befriend. Then and only then can we effectively reach out to a broader circle.

Amen I say to you what you did for one of these least ones you did it for me.