

## Christ the King – Year A

I should probably begin this homily by making a confession: It often happens that, when I am calling the chancery or another parish, I identify myself as Father Martin Day.

I didn't use to do that. When I was first ordained I was much more intent on emphasizing the priesthood of the faithful and the fact that even priests have to be grounded in the reality that we are all brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Identifying myself as a priest does seem to carry some weight with parish secretaries and others who answer the phones. They seem more inclined to go find the pastor or to see to it that the call gets forwarded.

I guess you can say that what I do is a form of name-dropping. There may be others present among us today we engage in that form of behavior. Sometimes the temptation is too strong and we just happen to mention the name of someone who carries weight with the hearer and increases our chances of getting a hearing.

I think that the second group of people, the ones identified as the goats, might have been susceptible to name dropping. At least, they seem to indicate that if the Lord had just let them know when it was that they had encountered him, they would have been more than willing to attend to him. Maybe they even would have done that if he

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had introduced to them “the little ones” they had overlooked as his ambassadors, they would have been more hospitable.

The “goats” seem a little hurt, even, that Jesus had not made things clearer for them and giving them a “heads up” that they were being evaluated. If they had known there was going to be an exam at the end, they could have practiced more.

The “sheep” are not involved in any of this sort of calculation. Like the goats, they are surprised at the last judgment. They also missed the Lord’s presence in the poor they encountered. No names were dropped. None were needed.

The sheep responded to the needs of the poor from a different motivation altogether. Rather than wanting to be able to be on the lookout for when Jesus was about to surprise them, as if they were in an episode of Candid Camera, they just did what they knew was the right thing to do:

They saw a need that they could meet and they met it. It does not appear that they thought about the possibility that Jesus was hidden in the encounter. The needs of the person standing in front of them were enough as they were, without adding a layer of devotional thinking.

And they still get full credit! Jesus invites them into the heavenly wedding feast simply on the

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basis of their charity to those he identifies with.

I think it was Henry Ford who said, “character is what you do when no one is looking.”

Something similar is a work in today’s gospel: Maybe you’ve had the experience of being called upon to do something and, immediately you just knew that it was the right thing to do and then you just did it. No internal monologue about the merits of acting or not, no speculation about whether it would be effective. You just did it. Without any calculation.

I think that is evidence of the Holy Spirit acting in us. For once we override the mental tapes of hesitation to say the words of care and extend the hands of care.

There is a universal type of caring action that does not regard the status of the person cared for or their potential to return the favor, either now or at some point in the future. This sort of caring does not consider what we will get in return, it simply does.

What goes along with this sort of caring is the tendency to do so without calling attention to oneself. We get caught up in a broader and more profound action of God’s own care for the world and find our freedom in it.

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Our caring is not the only thing going on and there's no need to receive applause for it. The reward for our actions is simply the privilege of being a part of the good.

If a reporter arrived on the scene at the heavenly wedding feast, to ask the sheep how it happened that they had been judged so favorable, perhaps the answer would be: "Not really sure. We just cared for every person we met, immediately, without calculation, and it was no big deal."