

The Lord Jesus is our Shepherd. At the end of time, he will come again and hand over the Kingdom to his father. He will judge between those who have lived their lives for others, and those who have lived for themselves (Ordo). The selfless will hear, “Well done, my good and faithful servant ... Come, share your master’s joy.” (Mt 25:23) The selfish and unrepentant will be judged unworthy do enter the Kingdom of heaven. They will hear, “Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil” (Mt 25:41).

Jesus is the just judge who judges fairly and impartially. His ways are not our ways. We may be very surprised at whom we meet in heaven. On the cross, Jesus hung between two men guilty of crimes. The Good Thief acknowledged his sinfulness, asked for forgiveness, and showed a true change of heart. He challenged the man who mocked Jesus from the cross. “‘We have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom’” (Lk 23:41-42). The penitent sinner receives salvation through the crucified Jesus. “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43). The Gospel of Luke is our only rock-solid source of information on the Good Thief. The Christian community constructed a story to fill in the gap, including his name. Dismas comes from the Greek word for “sunset” or “death.” And with the Divine Mercy of Jesus, many have been welcomed into the Kingdom in similar circumstances. ⁱ

Today we celebrate the feast of Christ the King. So, it is also worth looking at a saint whom we know a little more about in light of the Gospel from Matthew on the Judgement of Nations. “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25: 35-36).

November 17th is the Feast of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. When Elizabeth was 6 years old, her mother the Queen of Hungary was murdered. Jesus calls us to love our enemy. To turn the other cheek and to forgive. Even though she was quite young Elizabeth responded by turning to God in prayer. There, she found consolation.

Not uncommon for the 13th century, she was married as a young teen. Despite the age difference, she had a remarkable influence on her husband. She felt very strongly that she and her husband should live their lives based on the principles of the Gospel. Her husband Ludwig was a ruler in Thuringia and wholeheartedly supported her. Although affluent by virtue of their nobility, Elizabeth practiced a life of individual poverty while being quite generous to the poor.

In 1226, when her husband was far from their native land, “Elizabeth took charge of distributing aid to victims of disease and flooding.” As Pope Francis is fond of saying, she had ‘the smell of the sheep.’ “She took charge of caring for the afflicted, even when this required giving up the royal family’s own clothes and goods. Elizabeth arranged for a hospital to be built and is said to have provided for the needs of nearly a thousand desperately poor people on a daily basis.” ⁱⁱ

Ludwig died in 1227 and Elizabeth vowed never to remarry. She wanted to more fully embrace a life of poverty as a Third Order Franciscan. Rather than live off her wealth, she gave it way to build another hospital. Then, she worked in the hospital day and night to comfort the sick. Amidst a worldwide pandemic, many healthcare workers around the world are to be praised for their heroic efforts to serve the severely ill just as Saint Elizabeth of Hungary did 800 years ago. “Working continually with the severely ill, Elizabeth became sick herself, dying of illness in November of 1231. After she died, miraculous healings soon began to occur at her grave near the hospital, and she was declared a saint only four years later.” ⁱⁱⁱ

Elizabeth of Hungary drew her strength and example from Christ the King.

- Elizabeth had power and wealth by virtue of her nobility. She used it in the service of others. Like Jesus, she embraced poverty to enrich others. Whatever wealth we have in life is to be shared with others. We must all work for the common good.
- Prayer and faith in Jesus are very powerful. Prayer helped to console her amidst the tragic childhood loss of her mother. Prayer helped to guide her in important decisions throughout life to pick up her cross and to follow Jesus.
- “Faith and friendship with Christ, create a sense of justice, of universal equality, of the rights of others, and [fosters] love and charity. From this charity comes hope, the certainty that we are loved by Christ, that the love of Christ awaits us, thus making us capable of imitating Christ and of seeing Him in others” (Pope Benedict XVI).^{iv}

“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40).

ⁱ faith.nd.edu/s/1210/faith/interior.aspx

ⁱⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-elizabeth-of-hungary-56

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-says-elizabeth-of-hungary-a-model-for-those-in-authority