

CHRIST THE KING—Year A—M11-D22-Y2020

01. In today's Gospel, Jesus makes it very clear—that the criteria by which we will be judged is not so much Christian piety, but Christian charity — that is, we will be judged on how well we have treated our sisters and brothers—and not so much on how well we have performed acts of piety.
02. Because the PRIMARY expression of our faith is **not SUPERFICIAL acts of piety—but AUTHENTIC acts of charity** — and it is how we treat others that separate those who are **sincere lovers of Christ from those who are simply LOVERS OF RELIGION** — those who truly LIVE the faith, from those who simply PRACTICE the faith.
03. Because truly living our faith is about being aware that **God is present to us every moment of our lives—and that we encounter this God in everyone we meet, even the least likable person** — and *living our faith* is about responding to this encounter with God in such a way, that it changes **how we behave, how we live, and how we treat others.**
04. For every person we encounter, IS an encounter with Christ Himself—and when we are in the presence of another, we are in the Presence of Christ — because **God so loves, and so identifies Himself with each and every one of us**—that every time we encounter another (especially someone in need) we encounter Christ Himself.
05. For this reason, we will be judged PRIMARILY on how we respond to the Christ **we encounter in others — to the stranger among us — to the poor and the needy — to the sick and the imprisoned — to the outcasts and the weak** — for as St. John, the Apostle once wrote: *if we can't love our brother and sister that we can see, how can we love the God that we DO NOT see.*
06. In other words, if you take a moment now to think of **the person you like LEAST in this world—the way you treat this person is the extent to which you love God.**

07. Because love is not about **sentiments**, but about **actions** — love is not about **how we feel**, but about **how we behave** — love is not about **what we FEEL for others, but about what we DO for others.**
08. And although we are not called to LIKE EVERYONE—we are called to love everyone—to **treat everyone with the same dignity and respect that we would want to be treated.**
09. And so, we will not be judged on **the amount of warm, nice feelings we have for others—but on how we behave towards others** — because we can't control how we feel about others—we can ONLY CONTROL how we act towards them.
10. Today's Gospel reminds me a little of that famous children's tale by Oscar Wilde called: *The Happy Prince*. For those who are unfamiliar with the story, *The Happy Prince* is about a young prince who lived in a castle where he had **everything he could possibly want — and so he never experienced poverty and misery, sadness and suffering.**
11. And not only that, but the prince was also never allowed to **see or experience the outside world at all, the world beyond the boundaries of his palace, where poverty and misery were prevalent.**
12. And so, he had **no idea what really existed outside the earthly paradise he was privileged to live in.** Because those responsible for caring for the prince **didn't want him to see misery and poverty.** And so, the happy prince remained **ignorant of the suffering that lay outside the castle his ENTIRE LIFE.**
13. Although fiction, the story of the Happy Prince is a good example on how easy it is to ignore and avoid **the poor, the marginalized, the vulnerable — how difficult it is to see them—to see their suffering, their poverty, and their misery.** How we would often rather just walk the other way and avoid them altogether. And how difficult it is to see Christ IN THEM.
14. I think part of the reason for this is that we want to be **protected from seeing sorrow and misery like the Happy Prince was** — because

it's hard **to look at pain and poverty—to see the grim, and often ugly and unpleasant reality of them.** It's FAR easier to look the other way and to pretend they don't exist. And so, it takes **real effort on our part to look at suffering, and to acknowledge it.**

15. Because we live in a society, that in some sense, has created an illusionary palace like the one in the story of the Happy Prince — a palace where we only have to look at what's **beautiful, what's attractive, what's pleasant** — a society where we don't have to see the unpleasant reality of **poverty, misery and hardship.**
16. But Jesus challenges us, not to avoid or ignore these realities, **but to confront them head on — because, often, God is found, and is very much present, in the midst of these realities.**
17. And because **pain, poverty, and suffering** are all part of life — and the proper response to these realities is not necessarily to avoid them, but to make peace with them—**not to ignore or avoid the suffering of others, but to embrace others in their suffering** — and to do what is in our power to help relieve their misery.
18. Just as it is difficult to sometimes see Christ in the poor and the marginalized — and to see Him in those we find hard to love—**it can be even MORE DIFFICULT to see how Christ is truly King in a world tainted by cruelty and violence—in a society increasingly hostile to religion and matters of faith—in a year full of tragedies and unique hardships**—it can be difficult to see how Christ is King in the midst of all this.
19. And even in one's own life, it can sometimes be hard to see how Christ is King. Because how is Christ King if I've **lost my job and am now facing bankruptcy** — how is Christ King if **my marriage has fallen apart and I'm now looking at divorce** — how is Christ King if **I can't visit a dying relative because of covid-19 restrictions** — how is Christ King when a person is dealing with realities such as these.
20. But the key to seeing Christ Kingship in the world (and in our lives) is to understand that **Christ's victory, Christ's reign is not**

necessarily manifested in the **ABSENCE OF SUFFERING**, but in the **midst of it**. Because even in a year full of tragedies and hardships, **people are still finding reasons to be hopeful and grateful** — in a society increasingly hostile to religion and matters of faith, **people are still willing to risk their lives to attend public worship** — and in a world tainted by cruelty and violence, **people are still able to show forth compassion and kindness when touched by both**.

21. A good example of this is a story I read the other day about a **young musician from Quebec City named Remy Belanger—who was violently and randomly attacked by someone yielding a sword on Halloween night of this year**.
22. Remy survived the attack, but his injuries were quite severe, having suffered “...**multiple fractures and wounds to his head, shoulders, and lower back**” – including serious injuries to some of his fingers which will severely impact his ability to play the cello.
23. The Quebec City musician is still in hospital recovering from his injuries, but in a recent interview, he said that: he sees **no point in being angry with the man who attacked him**—and that it was in the ambulance, on the way to the hospital, that he decided to forgive his attacker.
24. He went on to say, AND I QUOTE: ***"As a cellist I've worked years and years to perfect the handling of the bow and now it's all gone. And you know what? I'm fine. I'm alive. I almost died, and I'm alive."***
25. He also said that, although: ***"...I'm in pretty bad shape in terms of my body...I'm in such high spirits, and I want to let you know, that it's because of all the support I've been getting from everybody, so thank you so much."***
26. What I love about this story, apart from how powerful and inspirational it is, is the fact that it really shows us **it's not so much what happens to us in life, but HOW WE REACT TO IT that can either make us or break us**—that can either show forth the Dominion of Christ, or the dominion of the evil one.

27. In other words, it shows us that **the key to seeing the Kingship of Christ is to ask ourselves TO WHO, OR TO WHAT do we give royal authority in our lives — who or what has the ultimate dominion over our lives and our hearts — are we subjects of hope or subjects of WORRY AND DESPAIR — are we ruled by fear or by FAITH AND TRUST — is it love that reigns in our hearts, or is it judgment and bitterness.**
28. Because **job loss, bankruptcy, divorce, alienation from loved ones, AS TERRIBLE AS THESE ARE—do not have the power to change us or define us unless we allow them to.**
29. Because, once again, **Christ’s reign is not manifested in the ABSENCE of suffering, but in the midst of it.** And because Christ doesn’t force His Kingship on us, OR on the world—rather **we have to choose His Kingship—we have to want His Kingship—and we have to manifest His Kingship—**by not allowing the cruelty in the world (and the challenges that life throws our way) to have **the ultimate authority, the ultimate say in shaping our lives and defining our character —** it is then, and ONLY THEN, that we will see **how Christ is truly King among us. AMEN.**

Points 22 to 25 inclusive (CBC News)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/r%C3%A9my-b%C3%A9langer-de-beauport-survivor-halloween-quebec-city-sword-attack-1.5808601>