

It's hard to believe another Church year is at an end. Where does the time go? Many of us find ourselves with a goodly number of years already behind us. How many do we have left?

That is a thought that today's gospel brings to our minds about the Last Day in which Jesus says,

**"When the Son of Man comes in his glory,
and all the angels with him."**

And as he sits there in all his glory, Christ the King has one thing on his mind -- judging the living and the dead. In other words, Jesus tells us that our eternal happiness depends on how we live this life and treat each other.

And if we have neglected to do so, we should not put off until tomorrow what we could do today, as Benjamin Franklin once said. It's good advice for all of us.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

We all will approach the day of Last Judgment when we die, ready or not. How we live our lives today will determine our eternity to come. Do good for others and we enter heaven. Neglect to do good and we spend our eternity without God.

My guess is that many of us really haven't done too many terrible things like murder, lying, stealing and cheating. Most of us don't go through life trying to inflict pain and misery on others. We don't wake up every morning thinking about bad, evil things like hurting someone or returning evil for evil done to us.

Rather, we strive to live life each day in virtue and godliness, in love and goodness as God has loved and cared for us.

But if truth to be told, we are not always loving and caring as we should be. We hurt people in small ways, in ways that likely don't severely damage our happiness with God.

And so, I imagine that many of us are confident enough of God's love and mercy, and confident enough of our conduct in this life, to not really feel that we have too much to worry about.

And then we read a Gospel passage such as the one we just heard proclaimed, the story about the Son of Man coming on the Last Day and separating the sheep from the goats.

Now, the first half isn't the problem. Do good things and good things will happen.

**"... feed the hungry, cloth the naked, care for the sick,
welcome the stranger,"**

then heaven is ours, is what the message seems to say. But that's not possible. We can't "earn", or make our way into heaven by our efforts alone.

However, the good that we do does provide some evidence of our openness to God's grace, outward evidence that we are responding to the God dwelling within us and that we are trying to take our discipleship seriously. When we measure ourselves in this way, most of us probably measure up at least to a reasonable degree.

It's the second half of today's Gospel that's the problem -- for when we measure ourselves against this standard, many of us, myself included, absolutely fall far short.

I know that I can often be a little like those in the story asking,

**"When did I see you hungry, thirsty, naked, ill,
or in prison and not help you?"**

This past week, I was awakened by a loud radio music coming through my window. At first, I said to myself, "Someone was in need of a place to rest."

But then it happened again on the second night and it got under skin. So irritated, I went down stairs, and told the homeless person to "knock it off". The face of Jesus whom I did not recognize in the person was my failure.

And so, maybe today is the wakeup call I need, the blast of cold air that will sober me up to the deepest realities of who I am as a child of God and as a disciple of Jesus.

Dear friends, every time we reach out to satisfy a need of someone else, we become better persons. We become a more loving person. We become more like Jesus Christ Himself.

When we feed the hungry, visit the sick and those in prison, when we find a home for the homeless and clothes for those without enough, we are becoming a kinder, nicer and more caring person.

There are a million things that can be done for others. And it is only the loving people who can enjoy the company, like themselves, in what is called heaven.

As St. Therese, the "Little Flower" expressed in her Diary, "I spend my heaven by doing good on earth."

And so, as another Church year comes to a close, we have the opportunity to look back and see what we've done, whether we've become the people God created us to be, caring and treating one another as we are loved and cared for by our God and King.

Today we have the opportunity to make known the goodness of God by conforming our lives more perfectly to that of our King.

That's what this day helps us do.

Amen.