

Readings: 1st = Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24(P 834) 2nd = Eph.1:15-23 (P 239) Gospel=Mat 25:31-46 (P38)

Introduction: The Liturgical Year A draws to an end & Year B kicks in – next week – 29 Nov - the beginning of Advent! While Advent has an element of being penitential – it also focus to a great extend on the reality of hope & our preparation to receive Christ, coming during this Advent tide.

Illustration: In The Book of Joy co-authored by The Dalai Lama – Leader o\T Tibetan People & Tibetan Buddhism; Arch Desmond Tutu & Douglas Abrams author, editor who resides in the USA – deals with a chapter in the book: **Loneliness: No need for introduction.** 1 o\T key thoughts flowing from this chapter is how people very selfishly focus on themselves (narcissus) & they comment: “If too much emphasis is placed on myself & I start to think that I’m someone special - then more anxiety & more nervousness comes into play” . (Pg 130) While the individual seeks greater happiness for her/himself through excessive self-focus – it ends up doing the opposite – you become disconnected & alienated from others; it’s also bad for your health – too much fear & distrust leads to stress & hypertension. A medical scientist stated that when people uses excessively the 1st person pronoun **I, me & mine** – they have a greater risk of having a heart attack – with much self-focus your vision becomes narrow & minor problem may be perceived as a major one.

Contents: The Gospel of **St. Matt** introduces us to the parable o\T final judgement which focus on 2 groups: the right (righteous) & the left (unrighteous) The story continues where the king would say: when I was hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick & imprisoned – you cared for me. The confused group on the right would ask when did that occur & the king replied when you cared for people in these needs mentioned. The group on the left were shun & told to move as they didn’t display the same kind of generosity towards the king & they asked as to when didn’t we display that towards you & he answered when no care for the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick & imprisoned were displayed. Failures to care for the marginalised, hungry, needy – means damnation.

To work for Christ & His kingdom, we don’t always have to be conscious of what we are doing, although we need to be aware o\T needs of our fellow human beings & how we can assist ably & being caring.

Application: What has this got to do with our gospel reading? Doesn’t it challenge us in terms of our neighbourliness – sister /brotherhood? When I was hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick & imprisoned, – were you there? Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers – you do it unto me says Jesus! We have an over flooding market of various “ism’s” – which lead to a great amount of confusions. Humanism, consumerism, communism, Marxism, whatever it means- we may be led by our noses- to believe that all of these are in line with our faith. It has certain elements that may connect the dots to our faith, but as a whole there’s a vast difference. Our caring for the hungry, poor, unemployed, marginalised means that we are stepping in the bridge where Jesus/ God would’ve been expected to have done the work. So it’s not to be – we are to do the work.

We see wonderful work being done by human relief groups: WHO, Medicine without Borders, the Mustaffin Foundation, UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees). People rally around when natural disasters like earthquakes, tornados, floods, hurricanes, tsunamis strike. Locally when informal settlements burnt, fires that destroy natural vegetation – fire brigades come to the rescue, when whales are beached – people assists, ferries capsized & people drown the NSRI assist, animals need to be rescued SPCA comes to the rescue.

Parishes RSVP to appeals during the month of compassion in August, soup kitchens & many contribute to other appeals like FIKELELA made during the course o\T year. While this is a great effort, it’s not always sustainable – people also need to be taught how to become self-reliant building capacity for their own independence. I want to caution & here we need to seek from God the gift of discernment. There are many “needy” people, driven by the Covid 19 pandemic & its consequences. Somehow when assisting we also need to teach how amidst the pandemic still to become productive – by doing small odd jobs. Pleading poverty becomes the modern motto: ‘since you work & I don’t / won’t you feed & care for me!’ I’m also aware that here we are also treading on thin ice, yet if we are in a position to give, we must give generously & unselfishly. If we think on the lines of degrees of poverty – I would argue in order of importance / dire needs: children 1st, followed by pregnant moms, seniors disabled & then finally whoever else is may be left behind.

In Conclusion: Finally & also without any compromise we pray the prayer by **Ignatius of Loyola**: “Teach me, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve: to give & not to count the cost; to fight & not heed the wounds; to work & not to look for rest; to labour & not to ask for any reward, except that of knowing that I do your will” **AMEN**