

## **“As You Did It Not To One Of The Least Of These, You Did It Not To Me”**

### **From the Holy Gospel of St. Matthew; 25:31-46**

*"When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.*

*Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'*

*Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?'*

*And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'*

*Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'*

*Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?'*

*Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.'*

*And they will go away **into eternal punishment**, but the righteous **into eternal life**."*

Do we allow the love of God to rule in our heart? St. Augustine had said, "Essentially, there are two kinds of people, because there are two kinds of love. **One is holy the other is selfish.** One is **subject to God**; the other **endeavours to equal Him.**" Jesus came not only to fulfil the law, but to transform it through the gift of the Holy Spirit who fills our hearts and minds with the love of God (Romans 5:5). Do we allow God's love to purify our heart, thoughts, and actions?

Jesus' story about the separation of goats and sheep must have unsettled his audience. In arid lands goats and sheep often grazed together during the day because green pasture was sparse. They were separated at night because goats needed shelter. Goats were also less docile and more restless than sheep. **They came to symbolize evil and thus the expression scapegoat** has become a

common expression for someone bearing blame for others (*read the book of Leviticus 26:16-33 for a description of the Day of Atonement.*) **Separation is an inevitable consequence of judgement.** The Day of Judgement will reveal **who showed true compassion and mercy** toward their neighbour.

Jesus teaches us a very important lesson about **loving our neighbour and taking responsibility for others.** God will judge us not only for the wrong we have done **but also for what we have failed to do.** Now is the time of God's mercy for seeking his help and grace to turn away from sin and to walk in his way of love. We need to seriously and sincerely ask the Lord our God to purify our hearts that we may love as He loves us and live charitably with all.

This portion of the Holy Gospel is similar to the parable about Lazarus and the rich man.

The rich man let Lazarus die on his doorstep and was doomed to crave for drops of cold water he had not thought of giving to the poor man.

It is recorded that when Martin of Tours (who lived in the 4th century), a young Roman soldier and seeker of the Christian faith, met an unclothed man begging for alms in the freezing cold, he stopped and cut his coat in two and gave half to the stranger. That night he dreamt he saw the heavenly court with Jesus robed in a torn cloak. One of the angels present asked, "Master, why do you wear that battered cloak?" Jesus replied, **"My servant Martin gave it to me."**

Martin's disciple and biographer Sulpicius Severus states that as a consequence of this vision Martin "flew to be baptized". God is gracious and merciful; his love compels us to treat others with mercy and kindness. When we do something for one of Jesus' little ones, we do it for Jesus the Christ.

Do we treat our neighbours with mercy and love as Jesus has treated us?

"Lord Jesus, be the Master and Ruler of my heart. May your love rule in my heart that I may only think and act with charity towards all."

**Amen.** God bless you.