



## Bible Reflection on Vocations

November 2017

### Serving the Poor Fosters Vocations

#### 1. *Read*

##### **Matthew 25:31-46**

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by 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, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, 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, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

(Gospel of the Solemnity of Christ the King,  
Year A, November 26, 2017)

## *2. Meditate*

This text is found only in Matthew's Gospel. It summarizes other sayings of Jesus about the importance of witness and service to others: "Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father." (Mt 5:16)

In the same way, consider that "...whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:19) And again, "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock." (Mt 7:24)

It looks like Jesus, in a manner unique to this Gospel, stresses the doing and acting rather than simply the hearing and believing. Mathew's Gospel and the Letter of James were often considered to be in polemic with the Pauline theology of "justification by faith."

Christianity recently commemorated 500 years of the Reformation, which is deemed to have started with the posting of Luther's postulates on the door of the Wittenberg church on October 31, 1517. We cannot underestimate the significance of the Reformation for Christianity, especially its emphasis on the use of the Scriptures. After deeper reflection on Paul's writings, however, the contrast of faith versus works as the means to salvation fades. Paul does not really argue for justification by faith alone to the exclusion of acts of charity and love.

Paul argues in Romans and Galatians that it is not just "faith" in the cognitive sense — as the strict Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone would claim — that merits salvation. Rather, Paul uses the word "faith" ("pistes") to mean fidelity, loyalty and faithfulness to God. Each of Paul's letters ends with a teaching about what a life of faith implies in a practical sense.

In Mathew's Last Judgment scene, the people will be judged not by the faith that they professed or the doctrine

that they upheld in life, but by their “life of faith” that translates into action.

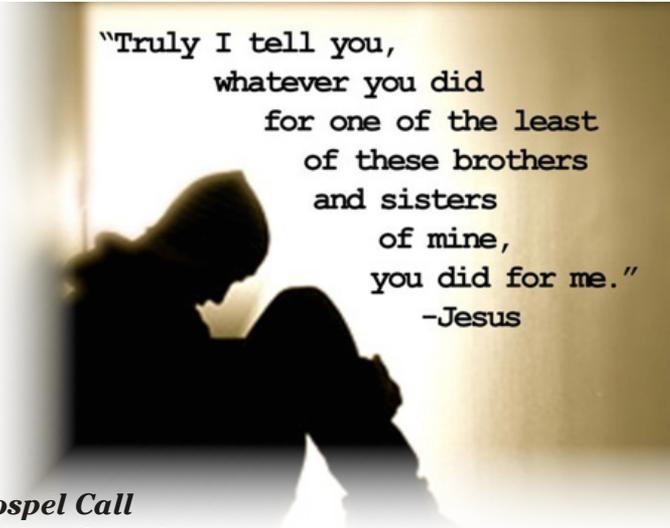
In this Gospel passage, Jesus seems to overlook the need for religious allegiance and belonging to Christ and the Church. Instead, the last judgment is made upon the merits of the heart and reaching out to the “little ones” who have various needs. For that reason, this text appeals to many people who value care and concern for others over church attendance or religious practices.

It seems that the religious congregations that have garnered many vocations are the groups that focus on the works of mercy. Here in Jamaica, the Missionaries of the Poor and the Mustard Seed Communities abound in vocations. Worldwide, the Sisters of Charity of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta are blessed with not only vocations but also with financial, lay personnel and other support and respect from a wide range of people, not just Christians.

What do these religiously committed Christians do? They reach out to the poorest of the poor, for whom nobody else, sometimes even the government, wants to show care or concern. The mission motto of some of these communities is a paraphrase of the sayings of this Gospel passage: I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty..., I was sick..., I was dying..., I was an immigrant..., I was a refugee..., I was abandoned and abused..., etc.

People look at what we do and how we live the Gospel values. Living Gospel values always attracts people. Humility, simplicity of life, and love for human beings, especially those most neglected and abandoned always creates respect and admiration even of those who do not practice any religion.

The living out of this Gospel always challenges us and causes us to reflect on the core values of life. It is a magnet that attracts people who seek true meaning for their lives.



"Truly I tell you,  
whatever you did  
for one of the least  
of these brothers  
and sisters  
of mine,  
you did for me."  
-Jesus

### 3. *Pray*

#### **Answering the Gospel Call**

*Lord, you call us to stray from the mainstream  
And to look at the periphery of life;  
To notice those who are often not noticed,  
those who suffer and are marginalized.  
You want us to reach out to them,  
selflessly and courageously,  
not just to inherit the kingdom  
but that our ministry and work  
may cause others to think about the true meaning of life.*

*Help us, Lord, to be the example for others to follow.  
Help us to see Your face in the faces of the neediest persons  
so that You may not be ignored  
for You are always present among the poor and suffering,  
among those in need of love and care.*

*Help us to do your will on earth. Amen.*

### 4. *Contemplate*

Try to see the face of the suffering Jesus on the cross in the people in need that you meet. Create in yourself the compassion of God for them.

### 5. *Act*

Do something concrete in response to your meditation on the Gospel. Reach out to the hungry, sick, those in prison or those who are refugees. Take someone with you when you do this.

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