

One Body Initiative Week 7: Whatever You Did for the Least of These

Scripture: Matthew 25: 31-40

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/25>

Commentary/Reflection:

From *Jesus of Nazareth*, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)¹

We encounter this connection [between Jesus's future glory and the Passion] in a uniquely concentrated form in the parable about the Last Judgment recounted in Saint Matthew's Gospel (25:31-46), in which the Son of Man, in the role of judge, identifies himself with those who hunger and thirst, with the strangers, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned—with all those who suffer in this world—and he describes behavior toward them as behavior toward himself. This is no mere fiction about the judge of the world, invented after the Resurrection. In becoming incarnate, he accomplished this identification with the utmost literalism. He is the man without property or home who has no place to lay his head (cf. Mt 8:19; Lk 9:58). He is the prisoner, the accused, and he dies naked on the Cross. This identification of the Son of Man who judges the world with those who suffer in every way presupposes the judge's identity with the early Jesus and reveals the inner unity of Cross and glory, of earthly existence in lowliness and future authority to judge the world. The Son of Man is one person alone, and that person is Jesus. This identity shows us the way, shows us the criterion according to which our lives will one day be judged.

From *Doing the Truth in Love*, Michael Himes, S.J.²

Let me direct your attention to one of the most startling claims in the New Testament. Indeed, I can not help but think that at least some of our earliest fellow-Christians must have been sorely tempted to say, "This is intolerable; it can't possibly be what Jesus meant. Let's simply omit it." The fact that the first generations of believers left it in is really quite astonishing and certainly very, very brave. The passage to which I am referring is Matthew 25:31-46, the familiar story of the separation of the sheep from the goats at the last judgment...

Notice, please, that *both* those on the right...*and* those on the left ask, "When did we see you in such need and ignore you?" One thing *both* the "sheep" *and* the "goats" agree on: they did not think about the Lord at all when they served or failed to serve their brothers and sisters. And both are told, "When you did or did not serve the least of my brothers and sisters, you served or failed to serve me" ...

In short, the ground for the final judgment is *agape*...

We cannot experience God unless we love our brothers and sisters, and we cannot love our brothers and sisters without experiencing God.

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York, Doubleday, 2007), 328.

² Michael J. Himes, S.J., *Doing the Truth in Love* (New York, Paulist Press, 1995), 50-55.

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know [God] in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone anymore. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship.

- Dorothy Day

Questions for Reflection:

1. This Scripture verse may be a familiar one. Try to read or listen with new ears: What stands out to you upon this reading of it?
2. “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Consider your own communities: How are you encountering those who experience suffering or marginalization?
3. What does it mean to you to be a “disciple” and not simply an “admirer” of Christ? What is most challenging about this? What keeps you going?
4. Consider a person in your life who exemplifies the ability to see Christ in others and respond. What do you notice about this person?
5. What does this passage say to you about being united as One Body? What wisdom does it offer us as we seek to approach injustices during this challenging time?