

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given on November 25, 2007
Christ the King - Liturgical Year C

I am sometimes asked about the prayer that we say just before Communion (“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”). It comes to us from the liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom; the full prayer reads:

O Lord, my God, I am not worthy that You should come into my soul, but I am glad that You have come to me because in Your loving kindness You desire to dwell in me. You ask me to open the door of my soul, which You alone have created, so that You may enter into it with Your loving kindness and dispel the darkness of my mind. I believe that You will do this for You did not turn away Mary Magdalene when she approached You in tears. Neither did you withhold forgiveness from the tax collector who repented of his sins or from the good thief who asked to be received into Your kingdom. Indeed, You numbered as Your friends all who came to You with repentant hearts. O God, You alone are blessed always, now, and forever.

For me, this describes the spectrum of being a disciple. One could fall far short like Judas, or one could get there just under the wire like the Good Thief. And there’s everything in between.

Judas knew Christ for three years. The Good Thief only knew Christ for three hours. For some of us, we have 60 or 70 or 80 years of discipleship. It is less about the “years in” and much more about the impact and the effort of our striving.

As for me and the impact discipleship has had on me, I think back 30 years ago to when I was a senior in college seminary. I was on retreat, and I heard “He is before all things. He is before all else that is.” I heard nothing else on that retreat. In four years in seminary, it was on that day when I entered the school of discipleship. It was when I really began to let Christ set the priorities and to characterize my life. I went from being a senior in college to a freshman in the school of discipleship – perhaps now I’m a sophomore or a junior!

Today we mark Christ the King. It is the end of the liturgical year, so it is a good time for end-of-the-year evaluations. How am I doing in the service of the King? Do I let him set the priorities for me? Do I choose to let his life characterize – give character – to mine? And do I do these things not just as an individual but as part of a community of faith?

Christ calls us to passionate spirituality. Judas had a greater passion than his passion for Christ. The Good Thief had NO greater passion than his longing for Christ, even as he was suffering his execution. For us as Christians, our spirituality is how we assess and foster our relationship with Christ. He fosters a passion in us – he catches our imagination – so that he can set our priorities and deepen our character.

Next week begins Advent, a time of awaiting Christ’s coming – not just at the end of time but everyday in various ways. In the next few weeks, we have opportunities to await his coming with presentations on the faith given by Celia Sirois and our own Fr. Dennis Sheehan. We can assist the underprivileged through the Giving Tree. We are called to penance and prayer as we await Christ, including Taizé prayer on December 10, 2007.

The Eucharist is a priority for Catholics because it is the embodiment of selfless love. It characterizes us as a community of faith and of love. Today, as we gather at the altar, let’s confess Him, so as to live in and contribute to the full flowering of his Kingdom.