

Tony Schmidt
February 19, 2018

We are a little less than one week into our Lenten journey and without beating around the bush, Jesus lets it be known the parameters of how we will be judged –

When I was hungry, did you give me food?
When I was thirsty, did you give me drink?
When I was a stranger, did you welcome me?
When I was naked, did you clothe me?
When I was ill, did you care for me? and
When in prison, did you visit me?

This message in today's gospel from Matthew is one of my favorites for several reasons. First, one of my favorite hymns, ***Whatsoever You Do*** clearly relates Jesus's message. It is easy to sing and it conjures up fond memories of my childhood faith formation. Secondly, the message does not require any advanced theological knowledge or special training to grasp, thus making it even more profound. But there is more to the story...

If you notice, all of the concepts that Jesus points out are ACTION based— feeding, clothing, visiting, caring, etc. In order for us to do these actions, we MUST be in RELATIONSHIP with other humans. The very nature of humans is to exist in community and the total cessation of human interaction can have devastating effects on the human mind. It's no wonder that relationships work best if both parties share a common language. S. D. Gordon, a popular author in the late 19th and early 20th century, wrote “ Jesus is God spelling himself out in a language that man can understand”. In order for us to understand God, we must learn the language and we do that by striving to emulate Jesus. And just like a language that is new to us, the more frequently you speak it, the more you come to understand and detect the nuances and subtleties, the more you feel comfortable conversing and expressing your truest intentions— the more it becomes a natural PART of you.

But, how does this relate to our Lenten journey? The answer may be this—growing our faith is a very intimate process within our own self, but is also a community matter as no one human can be totally independent from all others on a longterm basis. That is one of the reasons we come together as a parish family to worship at Mass. It is also why we participate in small faith groups, care for the vulnerable, the ill, ourselves and the ones we love. Obviously, the criteria listed in Matthew's gospel pertaining to how we will be judged is not strictly limited to food and drink, clothing or visiting.

As followers of Jesus, we must speak His language while providing spiritual nourishment for all we encounter , clothing the vulnerable with protection from what harms them, providing drink for those that thirst for knowledge and a real relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If these actions sound familiar, they all circle back to the five goals of our Lenten study:

Worship. Fellowship. Discipleship. Ministry and Evangelization.

May we use our eyes, hearts, and words to bring the Good news to others this Lenten Season.
May the Lord continue to bless you, Protect you from all evil and bring you to everlasting life. Amen!