

November 26, 2017 Christ In Disguise Homily: The English writer Caryl Houselander is unfortunately not a household name today. But back in the first half of the twentieth century, she was considered one of Europe's foremost writers on Christian spirituality. By her own admission, her philosophy of the Christian life was largely inspired by an extraordinary incident on the London underground. As a passenger on a crowded train she had a mystical vision of Christ. She inexplicably recognized Christ in all her fellow passengers: among others, the blind man, the bag lady, the factory worker and the merchant. Until that moment, they all were just anonymous faces without an identity. Their welfare was of no concern to her. Having seen Christ on the train in the faces of the passengers who surrounded her, she could then write of the gift of having a vivid sense of Christ living in all people. No longer were people anonymous and unworthy of her attention and concern.

She is not alone.

There is the case of St. Francis of Assisi. When he stooped down to kiss the disfigured face of a poor leper, he truly believed he had kissed the mouth of Christ.

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta could recognize Christ in the most distressing of disguises. In her remarks to her biographer and friend Eileen Egan, she states, "How could we turn away from Jesus? Each one is Jesus, only Jesus in a distressing disguise. Sometimes we meet Jesus rejected and covered in filth in the gutter. Sometimes we meet Jesus stuffed into a drain, or moaning with sores or rotting with gangrene... or even screaming from the agony of a broken back. The most distressing disguise calls for even more love from us"

Are we able to see Jesus in the sick, the needy and the forgotten?

The parable of the Last Judgment is the last of three parables of Judgment in Matthew's twenty-fifth chapter. The scene of the judgment inspired the legendary artist Michelangelo to reach unheard of heights in his masterpiece, the depiction of the Last Judgment, in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel. Christ reveals to have been a hidden presence in the poor, outcast and oppressed. He identifies Himself with every form of misery and suffering.

The key to this parable is how we are to be judged once our earthly pilgrimage comes to an end. The answer is that we will be judged uniquely in our treatment of those in any kind of need.

As we celebrate the Universal Kingship of Christ, we can recall, with appreciation, the words of the erstwhile pope, Benedict XVI: "If we put love for our neighbor into practice, in accordance with the gospel, we make room for God's dominion, and his Kingdom is actualized among us".

The traditional Christian hymn, *Where Charity and Love Prevail* sums up the beauty of the gospel. "Where charity and love prevail, there God is ever found, brought near together by Christ's love, by love are we thus bound."

In closing, I gladly cite a prayer written by an Eastern Orthodox Christian, Gillian Crow. The words of the prayer are an earnest appeal to see Christ living in all people.

"Lord, help me to see you in every person I meet today, even in those who are unlovely. Help me to remember whatever I do for another is done for you".

Amen!