

Let Us Keep the Teaching

And the King will answer, "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."

(Matthew 25:40 NJB)

The Parable of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) has long been the foundational text for CCSA. This parable is rich and complex. It is also unique in that it only occurs in Matthew and bears features that are found nowhere else in the Gospels. But we need not concern ourselves with all of that. The real point is that CCSA, since its beginning, has found in this parable the foundation for its work and has tried to meet the challenge of the mandate contained within this powerful teaching. In this parable it is clear that Jesus is saying that how we treat the "*least of these brothers of mine*" is the way we treat Him. Who are the "*least?*" They are the most afflicted with hunger, disease and forsakenness. They are the ones for whom no one else cares. They are the ones pushed by human actions and events to the margin of society and are often locked out even of the religious community. Jesus stipulates in this parable that how we treat these people, who are his brothers and sisters, is how we treat Him. I remember that Dorothy Day use to say that the drunk in the gutter is Jesus. Well, we get the point. The mission of CCSA is to take this teaching seriously and act on it. CCSA has been doing this for 36 years! There is a teaching in the Talmud that bears repeating here. God says to Israel: "*My children, when you gave food to the poor I counted it as though you had given it to me.*" (Mid. Tan. 15:9) It is a principle of Biblical ethics that the way to God passes through the neighbor. We see this very clearly in this parable of Jesus. This is the teaching and the subsequent action that is at the heart of CCSA.



We seem to be living in a time when those in real need become more and more expendable. Yet, CCSA continues its witness and ministry that this is not acceptable. Those in real need are our brothers and sisters. More than this, they are the brothers and sisters of Jesus the Christ. The world may not see this or admit it. That does not matter. CCSA does admit it and acts on it every day. There are only three paid staff members working for CCSA. We are truly thankful for Carole Denton, Lydia Lopez and Jack Blevins. But the real force that makes CCSA what it is and what it does are

the volunteers. I want the volunteers to always remember that it is their devotion, hard work and kindness that puts CCSA on the front line of meeting the mandate of the Parable of the Last Judgment. I do not think any of our volunteers should ever forget how important it is for a client to be treated with human dignity, respect, caring and generous kindness. Every time one of our staff members or a volunteer relates to a client in this way than the confirmation of the client's humanity and worth takes place. But this confirmation also affirms the holiness of Jesus and the mandate He makes in the parable which guides CCSA in its ministry. No staff member or volunteer ought to ever underestimate the importance of what is done by them on a daily basis as clients are met and served.

After all, one act of kindness outweighs eternity. One of act of solidarity with a person in need is worth more than all theologies. Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez said that and we must take it to heart.

It is also to be said that our member churches and our private supporters also engage in serving "*the least of these*" who are the brothers and sisters of Jesus the Christ. The support and generosity of our member churches and our private supporters has been nothing short of phenomenal. Just look at the 2010 Hunger walk and the over \$26,000 it raised. This is the most money every made by a CCSA Hunger Walk in its history! Yet, this happened in the midst of the worst economic situation this country has had since the Great Depression. Is this a miracle? Of course it is. But it is a miracle because no matter the difficulties people are personally in, as one body they kept the mandate of the parable of the Last Judgment. They acted to meet the needs of the "*least of these*" who are the brothers and sisters of Jesus the Christ, our Master. Again, all of the supporters of CCSA must never forget that there is no such thing as a trivial act of kindness. Every act of kindness has holy and cosmic significance.

I am more than proud to be a part of CCSA. I am honored to be a partner with all of you in the work CCSA continues to do. And, like all of you, I seek to fulfill the mandate of the Parable of the Last Judgment. Working together in the days ahead we shall do just that and we shall not falter or fail.

**Yours in Faith,
Jerry D. Lawritson
Vice-President of CCSA and Liaison Officer.**