

## CHRIST THE KING (Year C) 11-23-2025 Homily

### I. Introduction

Once upon a time, many years ago, there was a man named Dismas who found himself very easily impressed—by people who had class. He liked the way they looked, the way they spoke, the way they seemed successful at everything, and the way other people show them deference and respect, and treated them as valuable and important. Dismas didn't just admire these persons; he wanted to *be* one of them, and he daydreamed about important people seeking his advice and about servants catering to his every whim. However, when the daydreams ended, Dismas was confronted with the harsh reality: he was the youngest member of a poor, insignificant family in Jerusalem, a nobody with no prospects and no future. He wasn't good looking or witty or dignified, and no one paid any attention to him—not even in his own family. The one thing Dismas did have, however, was an all-consuming desire to live like a king, and that desire led him to hire himself out as a servant to a wealthy family, just to get a foothold into the society of the rich and important.

At first Dismas was happy to be a servant to such a classy family, and when they were away he liked to wander through their beautiful home, pretending it belonged to him. Eventually, however, the novelty wore off, and he wondered what he could do to make his dreams a reality. A thought—actually, a temptation—came to him. Unknown to the family, he had discovered where they hid their gold and other valuables. With those riches, he could escape to a new land, create a new identity for himself, and finally become the person of dignity and class he had always dreamt of being. Dismas recruited a friend, another poor servant like himself, and one night they successfully stole the treasure. However, something terribly unexpected then happened: the so-called friend went to the owners of the house and, in order to collect a reward from them, denounced Dismas as the thief. He was quickly arrested, tried, and condemned to death—death on a cross outside Jerusalem. There the man who had spent his life searching for class was slowly dying in the most humiliating way possible, observed by hundreds of hostile, unsympathetic eyes.

Being crucified was very painful, and for the first few hours Dismas couldn't think of anything but the agony and shame he was experiencing; it was as if he was all alone, being judged and condemned by everyone down below. Then, however, he became aware of the man on the cross next to him—a man the people and soldiers were mocking as a king. What was a king doing next to him on a cross? “How ironic,” Dismas thought, “on the last day of my all-too short life, I'm finally rubbing elbows with a king. What a cruel joke.” However, Dismas was surprised when the man finally spoke after all the curses and obscenities that had been shouted at Him. “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.” Turning toward Him, their eyes met, and the man asked, “Is there anything I can do for you?” Somehow, without knowing why, Dismas believed this man named Jesus *could* help him and, more importantly, that He really wanted to. Tears came to his eyes as he realized that, for the first time, someone was treating him with dignity, and he said, “Don't leave me; please don't leave me.” He heard Jesus respond, “I won't leave you; you will be with Me—I promise it!” Dismas sighed happily, and a few moments later, the two men went together with a touch of class (Andre Papineau, *Breakthrough Stories of Conversion*, p. 135).

## II. Development

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King, and one of the things a king is supposed to do is have a commanding presence, a sense of royal dignity, and a touch of class. Jesus is different from every other king throughout history—not only because He’s divine, not only because His is not an earthly kingdom, and not only because His reign will last forever. As King, Jesus is truly dignified—and if we open our hearts, He is able to give us a sense of dignity, too.

## III. Conclusion

The 2nd Reading from the Letter to the Colossians says, “Give thanks to the Father for having made you *worthy* to share the lot of the saints in light.” Through Jesus, we have been made worthy to live in Heaven, sharing the royal dignity of God’s children. This means three things in particular. First of all, we never have a reason to look down on ourselves or to consider our lives worthless. It’s wrong to think, “The only way I can be happy is if . . . I lose twenty pounds . . . if I get a promotion at work . . . if I win an important award . . . if I get a facelift . . . if I buy a hot new sports car,” or anything else like that. We don’t have to do anything to earn or acquire true dignity or class; we only have to accept what Jesus has already won for us.

Secondly, we never have a reason to look down on others, for they too share the dignity of God’s children—even people who are homeless, criminals, obnoxious, difficult, or irritating. We’re called to help them in their need, to forgive them when they hurt or offend us, to pray for their conversion, to love them, and to leave the judging to God. He’s able to give a sense of class to even the most unlikely people.

Thirdly, because of the dignity God has already given us, we have a standard or ideal to live up to. Jesus once said, “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” We’ll never completely achieve that ideal here on earth, but it is something we should be constantly striving for. This simply means loving God and our neighbor as much as we can, trusting in the Lord in all things, and trying to come closer to God each day.

The fictional story about Dismas—known to history as the “Good Thief”—reminds us that there’s always reason to hope, that Jesus loves and accepts everyone, and that His presence in our lives is the source of true and lasting dignity. May the Lord’s blessing touch and transform us, and help us all become the persons we’re meant to be.