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Daily Reflections

Journeying through Lent



Center for Spiritual Development

GIVE ABUNDANTLY!

By Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

Today's Gospel

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?'

And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to

those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave me no food, I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

MATTHEW 25:31-46

Reflection

This gospel reading from Matthew never ceases to give me pause. It is such a direct challenge to all who call themselves Christian, because Jesus was very clear on our duties to one another. It is such a powerful passage to reflect upon because it points us to areas in our lives where we can do better. It is helpful to think through each of these – hunger, thirst, welcome, clothing, and prison.

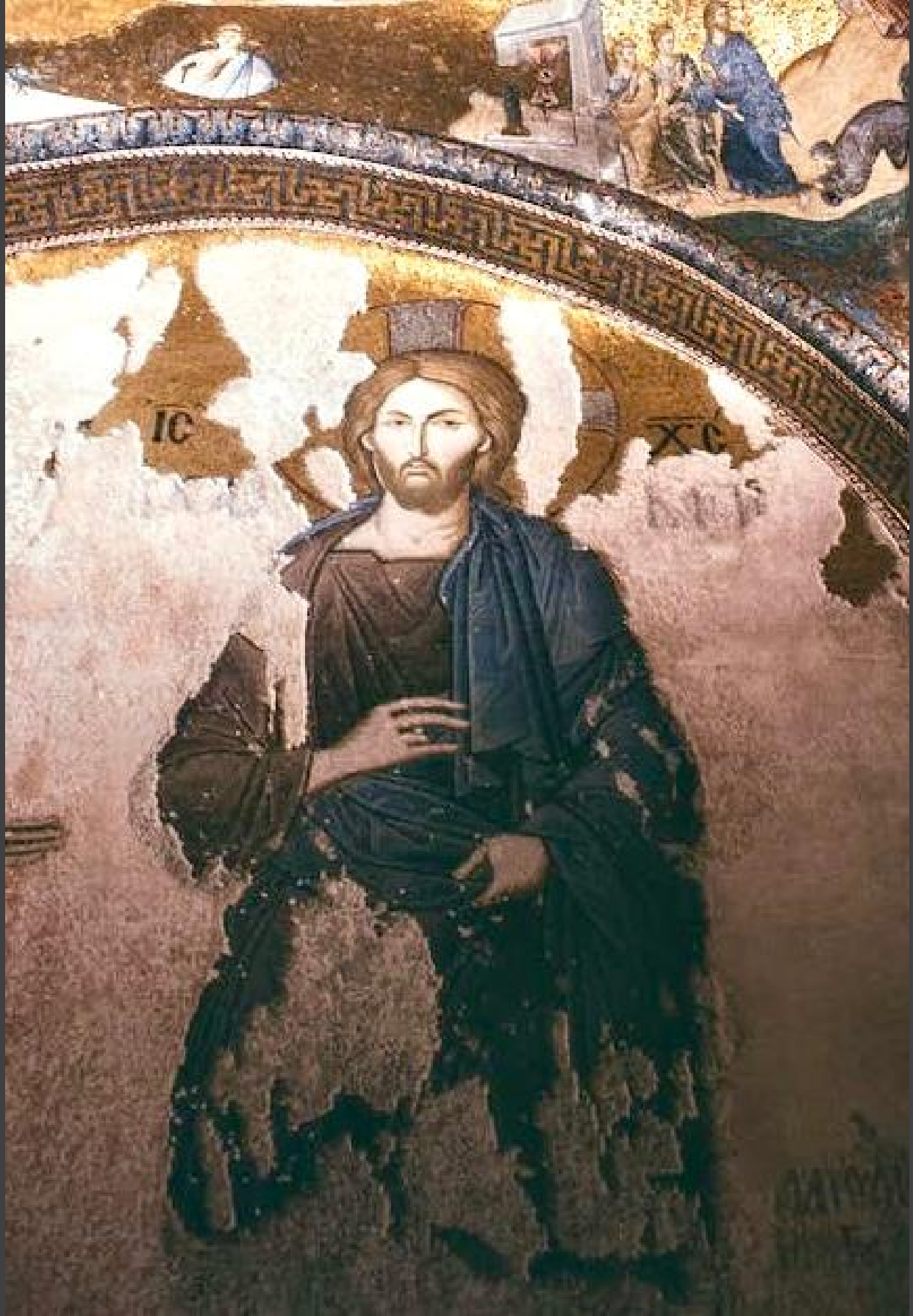
One way to do this is to take these words with their literal meaning. For example, hunger. How much food do I waste? Do I compost? Do I volunteer at soup kitchens or other places that serve food to the hungry? Do I donate food? If we consider thirst, the same types of questions can apply. Do I drink from single-use bottles? Am I wasting the precious resource of water? Do I offer drink to those who are thirsty?

The challenge of welcome is a subtle one because I might be welcoming to those I know or who are in my circles of engagement. What about those who are not? How welcoming am I? Do I welcome the differences in beliefs, religions, perspectives? Clothing is another area to ponder. Do I donate clothes to places that distribute them to those in need? Do I purchase items that are made from recyclable materials? Do I hold off purchasing an item because it is a “want” versus a “need”?

Another way to reflect on his passage from Mark is to go inward and use the words as a metaphor in one's own life. For what do I hunger? For what do I thirst? What needs to be welcomed in my own life? What parts of me am I ignoring or excluding? Why? In terms of clothing, am I figuratively wearing something that blocks me from seeing what is really going on? Am I covering up a part of myself that needs healing? Forgiveness? Reconciliation? In terms of prison, have I kept someone at a distance because I really don't want to engage with them? Is there a part of me that desires to be released? Why have I

shut that part of me down?

Looking externally at our actions, or lack thereof, is a healthy way to move into Lent. It reveals our sins of omission or commission. It can help us to be more loving and compassionate people to others and to ourselves. Looking inward, at our authentic selves, can reveal those parts of us in need of healing, forgiveness, or reconciliation. Today we are being invited to explore these desert areas of our lives.



Byzantine mosaic of Jesus Christ in Chora Church, Istanbul
Photo by Ludovic Debono

For Pondering

- Reflect on the questions above. Choose one or two that you find the most challenging (hunger, thirst, welcome, clothing, or prison).
- Choose the same word as you chose in the first question and go inward. Is there something in your inner life that hungers, thirsts, needs welcoming, attention, or release?

For Prayer

*Jesus,
you point us in a direction to see our brothers and sisters
and their needs.
May we have eyes to see, ears to hear,
and hearts open and responsive to those
whom we can accompany and assist.
May we have the courage, fortitude, and desire
to respond generously to the challenges that have been put before us
through Your life and Word.
Amen.*

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