

Homily for the Thirty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
The Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King
Sunday November 23rd, 2008

(Fr. Trey's Homily to High School Youth Attending the Weekend Winter Retreat at Feliciana Retreat Center in Norwood, Louisiana; Saturday Night Mass)

Well, it's been a very long day, and I know that we're all pretty tired. But today is a very important day in our church year. Today is known as the *Feast of Christ the King*. The Gospel that we just heard, though, doesn't have a really triumphant tone to it. Instead, we hear Jesus say those words that we've all heard many times before, "*whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.*" These words, believe it or not, remind us of some of the good things that we have experienced during this retreat. Many of you have said (in your small groups and here in the large group) that you have "*seen a side to people that you've never seen before*" and that this has led you to a deeper respect for others. Retreat can do this for you, but right now I'd like to ask you to take that thought one step further. What does it mean for us *to really be* someone's brother or sister? Because that's going to be our real challenge when this retreat ends tomorrow and we return to everyday life.

(Pause)

I realize that, over the past 4 years, I have shared with you all more than once different aspects of my experience of being sick with cancer. Tonight, if it's O.K. with you, I'd like to share something with you that I've only talked about in a couple of places. One of the most humbling parts of that whole experience was one of the biggest blessings of it also. During the time after my surgery when I was in the hospital, I really couldn't do anything for myself. I mean, anything. There's no need to go into too much detail, but for most of my stay in the hospital, I needed someone to help me with pretty much anything that I did. Think for a moment about some of those basic, everyday things that we do and take for granted: sitting up, standing up, getting out of bed, walking, getting dressed, going to the bathroom, and so on. The doctors and especially the nursing staff were all awesome. During the night, however, *my brother* would come to the hospital and stay with me. He would work all day, go home for a moment, and then come and spend the night with me. All night long, because of the pain, the discomfort, and the anxiety that I was experiencing, I constantly needed him to help me. Trust me

when I tell you that, on his part, this was no easy task. He's my only brother. Before that experience we were close. After it, well, we were closer. Night after night, he would do things for me that many people might not have been comfortable doing. And he did it *without any hesitation at all*. He was and is a brother to me in more ways than one.

My point is this. To be brother or sister to someone you often have to do the things that no one else is willing to do. You have to be willing to roll up your sleeves and deal with the messiness of life. Most of us have biological brothers and sisters, but we also know that *we are all brothers and sisters in the Lord*. The problem is this, however. Sometimes we see someone in need, and because of the messiness of the need, we shy away from it. It may be a poor person on the street, or an elderly person who can barely get around on their own, or someone who is sick, or dying, or suffering because they just lost someone whom they love. And, as we've all talked about a lot during this retreat, it may simply be that other guy, that other girl at school who gets judged and excluded by others and just needs a friend, someone to talk to.

(Pause)

You see what I mean?

(Pause)

Here during these days of retreat our concept of "brother and sister" has been expanded, broadened. All of you have shared this with us and with one another. But this is an out-of-the-ordinary environment. This is not our everyday experience. The real task is going to be seen in how we feel, react, and respond when we go home. Back to school. Back to work. *"Whenever we do it for the least of our sisters and brothers, we do it for Jesus. And when we don't do it for them, we don't do it for him either."*

(Pause)

To be brother or sister to someone you often have to do the things that no one else is willing to do.

(Pause)

What are we willing to do? And better yet, who are we willing to do it for?