# “To Be Christ Like”

What does it mean to be Christ like? As St James tells us in the second reading, to be Christ like means treating everyone with respect and dignity as Jesus would.

This reminds me of a true story I heard recently. Three men went to a conference in Chicago. Before they left, the wife of one of them told him: “You must not be late in getting back, you must not miss your flight. They kissed goodbye and he left.

On the way back, the three men were running down the airport so they will not miss their flight. There was a visually impaired girl selling apples in the airport. Somehow somebody bumped her table and all the apples flew off her table. The three men kept running. However, one of them stopped and yelled to the other two, “Tell my wife that I will be late”. It was the man whose wife told him not to be late. The man turned back picked up all the apples and paid for any that was damaged.

Experiencing these, the visually impaired girl was so touched that she asked the man, “Are you Jesus?” **As we can see in the story**, the act of **kindness** and **self-giving** that the man demonstrated, made the girl experience the **respect** of **human dignity**, **compassion**, and ultimately the **love of Jesus**. To the visually impaired girl, the man was Christ like.

**Becoming Christ like** involves a whole lot more than practicing religious virtues such as chastity, modesty in our thoughts, words and actions. It also involves dedication to the social justice teaching of the gospels. It has to do with all the virtues not only of those that are related to the 6th commandment but to all other virtues.

**St James** tells us that being Christ like has to do with showing **the same respect** to the **poor and shabbily dressed** as we would to those **of socially high status**. It means elevating the poor as opposed to condemning the well to do. A modern day version of this teaching is what **Pope Francis** has been saying since his election. His message is at the heart of **social justice** and **humility**, two things that do not look so very pious.

**If we really pay attention** to what Jesus said and did, we find that He often upset the status quo by ignoring the social norm of His day. He spent time with the prostitutes, detested tax collectors, the poor, the outcast, the sinners, and those religious leaders considered **unclean** who are to be **avoided** at all cost. These are the people Jesus said would be accepted into the kingdom of God.

**We also see Jesus healing the leper**, the blind, the lame, the mute, and deaf people often considered responsible for their condition because they were out of favor with God because of their personal sins. Similarly, today we blame victims of poverty for being poor. But Jesus came to heal and to make people whole both physically and spiritually. He came to restore nature thereby give witness to the kingdom of God. Thus we find Jesus healing the man with the speech impediment in today’s gospel as prophet Isaiah said would happen at the coming of the Messiah.

I think Jesus and Pope Francis are challenging us to go out to those who are marginalized and rejected by society roll up our sleeves and get dirty. That is where we will find the kingdom of God alive and growing. To be Christ like means to conquer the world with kindness, compassion and love of our neighbor then our religious practices have to be backed up with true respect and love of our neighbor.

As we come to the table of the Lord, let us think of ways we need to become Christ like.