

# **TANGAZA COLLEGE**

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

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**LOVE AND MERCY AS THE PRINCIPLES OF THE LAST  
JUDGMENT**

Exegesis of Matt 25: 31– 46, Its Message and Application to  
Christian Life.

MODERATOR

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the  
Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in Theology.

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## DEDICATION

To

my mum, Volazara Brigitte

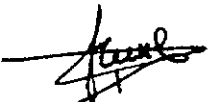
and to my dad, Morasidy Vincent de Paul

who first nourished my faith

since my childhood.

## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in Theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed:  .....

Paulin HOROSIDY, C.S.Sp.

(Student)

Date: *27 January 2005* .....

This Long Essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the College Supervisor.

Signed: *Ambrose Mutinda, CSSp* .....

Rev. Fr. Ambrose Mutinda, C.S.Sp., S.S.L.

(Supervisor)

Date: *27 January 2005* .....

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I am particularly grateful to Fr. Tom MacDonald, C.S.Sp., Pedro and Webster my confreres who willingly accepted to read this essay and polish my spellings.

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# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## **1. Exposition of the Topic**

This is an exegetical analysis of Matthew 25: 31– 46. It aims at bringing about its message to us so that we may be able to apply it in our Christian lives. It will be based on the last judgment scene or the second coming of Jesus and its message, and the way we should prepare for this event as Christians. At the last judgment scene. Jesus issued a statement, as portrayed by Matthew in the passage mentioned above, that our final judgment will be based on our concern or lack of it to those who are the most vulnerable, marginalized or in need. Today we still have them among us, they still challenge us as during the time of Matthew; What have we done to them in order to help them or to improve their situation, or are we indifferent to their need? Whatever we do or not do to them, we do it or not do it to Jesus himself since they are his representatives. These two statements of Jesus (Matt 25: 40, 45) are still alarming to our ears as Christians today in the twenty-first century.

## **2. Motive of the Study**

There are a number of reasons that motivated me to undertake this study. Firstly, if there is something that the Malagasy people are the most afraid of, it is death and the anxiety of the after death on either the deceased would be counted in the rank of the ancestors or not, depending on how one lived one's earthly life. If the

the rank of the ancestors or not, depending on how one lived one's earthly life. If the person lived a good life, generous and compassionate towards others, the latter will surely be counted among the ancestors. On the funeral day there are long eulogies by different speakers who speak about a deceased's good deeds, contrarily to the funeral of the thieves, murderers, witchdoctors, wizards. theirs lack such speeches, or if any, it is a short one.

Secondly, in many parishes, I have seen beggars and people who seek help. Most of the time, if these parishes do not have groups that take care of these people in need, they are categorically dismissed from there. Consequently, these people go back as they came. On one hand, in my experience, some of these people are really in need; while on the other hand, others are really professional beggars. The challenge is to distinguish between those who really represent Christ and those who do not. However, as a matter of fact, there are people who are living in the streets. These are men, women and children who are also children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ.

So I asked myself: "why are these people on the street; Who can help them? And what can be done to them as Christians?" In order to answer these questions, this passage of Matthew 25: 31–46 seems to me very relevant. This is why I decided to study more about this scene of the last judgment.

### **3. Method of the Study**

In this essay, we will use many commentaries that the biblical scholars have produced and periodicals that are relevant to this study. This will help us to support our ideas in treating this research.

The historical hypothesis admits that the Gospel of Matthew was written sometime during the last twenty years of the first century, after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans.<sup>1</sup> This Gospel was addressed to Jewish and to Gentile, Greek-speaking Christians with their Jewish and Gentile backgrounds.<sup>2</sup> We have employed the electronic program "Bible works 4." Both Greek New Testament texts and Revised Standard Version texts were taken from this same programme mentioned above.

#### **4. Structure and Contents**

This work is divided into three chapters with the general introduction and general conclusion. Each chapter has its own short introduction and conclusion. The first chapter situates the text, the second chapter is the exegetical analysis of Matthew 25: 31– 46, which is the core of this work; and finally the third chapter is the message and the application of the studied text to two particular situations. i.e. Centre for rehabilitation of street children i.e. in Madagascar, and Refugee camp, in Kigoma, Tanzania. Some ways of helping these little ones who are Christ's representatives are suggested in this very chapter.

At the present moment, the Church's mission is to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28: 19) and to stand as a model of the will of God for the human community.<sup>3</sup> Today, our world still needs to be evangelised so that the poor could

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<sup>1</sup> R.B. HAYS, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament, A Contemporary Introduction to the New Testament Ethics*, 107.

<sup>2</sup> J. MULENGA, *An Exegesis of Matthew 16: 13–20, The Identity of Jesus and Its Importance for Christian Living*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> R. B. HAYS, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament, A Contemporary Introduction to the New Testament Ethics*, 109.

have a place to live in and rights to education, professionalisation, and the share for the goods of this world like anybody else in society.

# CHAPTER I

## SITUATING THE TEXT Matt 25: 31– 46

### 1. Introduction

In this first chapter, we are going to analyse the delimitation of our pericope, taking into consideration the *Terminus a quo* and the *Terminus ad quem*.<sup>4</sup> After this, we shall make a textual criticism, which will help us, through the previous works of the scholars, to be closer to the original text and its original meaning. We shall after that establish the form and the structure of the text. Thereafter, we will study the context of the text, i.e. the remote context and the immediate context. Finally, we shall see the source criticism, which will help us to know the place where Matthew got this specific material.

### 2. Delimitation of the Text

#### 2.1 *Terminus a Quo*

Our pericope begins in Matt 25: 31: “Ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ...” This verse introduces a change of time and place. Jesus is shifting his method of doing things from warning to conclusion.<sup>5</sup> Previously, Jesus was speaking about the parable of the talents whereby people who misuse the gifts of

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<sup>4</sup> The *Terminus a quo* and *Terminus ad quem* are Latin words, which mean the beginning and the end of the pericope.

<sup>5</sup> V. F. FLOYD, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 263.

God, will be deprived of them. The gifts are given to another and the ungrateful will be punished in the darkness where there is the suffering and the grinding of teeth. (Matt 25: 30)

From verse 31, Jesus is talking of different topics about the last judgment. Therefore, the fact that there are changes of place, time, topic, characters and personalities indicate that verse 31 is the beginning of our text. "... for the first time in this section of teaching, we are told explicitly what kind of life will be rewarded, and what kind of life will be punished."<sup>6</sup>

## ***2.2 Terminus ad Quem***

The scene about the final judgment ends with Matt 25: 46, as it is the conclusion of the pericope: "καὶ ἀπελεύσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον." Chapter 26 is not part of our pericope because in it, Jesus speaks of the Passover and his forthcoming passion. The phrase "when Jesus had finished saying all these things..." shows the change of topic and activity. Since Jesus has made known to his disciples what will happen at the end of time, he is now able to share with them about his suffering, death and resurrection. The duty of the disciples is to show in practice that God is love and merciful.

## **3. Textual Criticism**

According to Bruce M. Metzger, there is one problem regarding the text, as concerning the use of the word τὸ ἠτοιμασμένον:

Was the expression (τὸ ἠτοιμασμένον) "which my Father prepared" softened by copyists to the less explicit passive participle, agreeing with ἠτοιμασμένην in ver. 34; or was ὁ πατήρ μου introduced in order to provide a parallel to τοῦ πατρός μου of the earlier verse? Since either is possible, a majority of the committee preferred to make its decision on the basis of the weight of the external evidence, which is

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<sup>6</sup> J.C. FENTON, *Saint Matthew*, 400.

heavily in support of the shorter reading. In any case, the reading τῶ ἡτοιμασμένῳ and οὐ ἡτοίμασεν ὁ κύριος are secondary developments of the other two readings.<sup>7</sup>

And in this first edition, the use of the Greek word τὸ ἡτοιμασμένον<sup>8</sup> in v.41 is in category {B} which indicates that there is some degree of doubt concerning the reading selected from the text. It is therefore not the saying of Jesus but it is from Matthew himself intending to alleviate the situation of those who are doing a good job during his time. While in edition 2 of *A Textual Commentary On the Greek New Testament*, Metzger did not say anything about this passage of Matt 25: 31–46.

Barbara E. Bowe<sup>9</sup> admits that the interpreters of this Gospel scene ask two important questions: firstly what is the meaning of the “all the nations” and secondly the meaning of “these least brothers”. Moreover, she concludes that “all nations” can refer to humanity in general meaning that it is the judgment on “all flesh”; also it can only refer to the gentiles, as it seems to be the case elsewhere in the gospel (Matt 21: 43)

While “the least brothers” can mean anyone non-elite and a dependant status in the world, or it can be more specific denoting Matthean Christians as it does elsewhere in the gospel (Matt 5: 19). Therefore, this scene can have either particular or universal application. It is the judgment of all humanity<sup>10</sup> and individually<sup>11</sup>. This statement is expressed in many Matthean parables and allegories such as the

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<sup>7</sup> B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary On the Greek New Testament*, 63–64.

<sup>8</sup> B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary On the Greek New Testament*, 63.

<sup>9</sup> B.E. BOWE, *The Criteria for judgment in the Gospel in the Gospel of Matthew*, 300.

<sup>10</sup> R.H. GUNDRY, *Matthew, A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 511.

<sup>11</sup> Matt 25: 32b “...and he will separate them one from another,” meaning that the king is separating each person from one to another.

parables of the lost sheep (Matt 10: 16; 15: 24; 18: 12), of the good and the bad servants (Matt 12: 35.) The angels help him to do the job of separation.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. Form and Structure of the Text

##### 4.1 Form

Most of the scholars say that the form of our pericope is an imaginative scene but not a parable as such. This scene is the *Parousia*.<sup>13</sup> But according to George A. Buttrick, "it is haggadah<sup>14</sup> as much as Parable, and has elements of magnificent Hebrew poetry."<sup>15</sup>

In Rabbinic writing, "Haggadah is often described as that segment of rabbinic literature which deals with morals, ethics, and daily life; provides the motivation and the will to follow Yahweh and to perform his commandments; includes the discussions of Yahweh's attributes; or contains words of comfort."<sup>16</sup> The latter is therefore more imaginative, and it does not have much authority in daily lives, since it deals rather with the manner and behaviour.

The passage under discussion is often praised for its *humanitarian emphasis* and its rich *Christological teaching*.<sup>17</sup> It is a kind of conclusion of Jesus' teaching throughout the gospel of Matthew. Jesus has told his followers that the expectation to enter the kingdom of God consists of deeds rather than of words and the latter

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<sup>12</sup> R.H. GUNDRY, *Matthew, A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 512.

<sup>13</sup> *Parousia* is the final appearance of Jesus Christ with his angels at the end of time gathering the elect (Matt 24:31; Mark 13:27). It always designates Jesus' eschatological coming. The usual translation is the "return" or the "second coming" of Jesus at the end of the world.

<sup>14</sup> The *Haggadah* is a form of doctrinal reflection. It consists in reflection on the theological significance of events.

<sup>15</sup> G.A. BUTTRICK, "The Gospel According to St. Matthew," *The Interpreter's Bible* VII, 562.

<sup>16</sup> J.P. MEIER, *Gospel of Matthew*, 634-635.

<sup>17</sup> V. F. FLOYD, *A Commentary On the Gospel According to Matthew*, 266.

must be expressed in the works of mercy to the most vulnerable, in whom Jesus is present:

Moreover these deeds are not sacrifices of the Law, but mercy, (Matt 9: 13; 12: 7); and this mercy must be shown to those who are weak and like children, and in this way shown to Jesus himself, (Matt 18: 5).<sup>18</sup>

J.P Meier, in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, comments that the Church is suffering persecution from without and, worse still, apostasy, hate, false prophets, wickedness, and lovelessness from within.<sup>19</sup> Matthew wrote therefore this text for his Church that is experiencing deep division.

#### **4.2 Structure**

The verses 31-33 are the base of this scene<sup>20</sup>, that is, the coming of the Son of Man at the end of time. Then the structure of the text that follows is the “twin conversations in vv. 34-45.”<sup>21</sup> The twin conversations are composed firstly between the judge and those who are on his right and secondly between the judge and those who are on his left.

Each dialogue consists of (i) declaration of the king, (ii) response of the just/unjust, and (iii) justification of the sentence, and each features introductory and responsive *toré* vv. 34, 37, 41, 44, 45) and concludes with a statement prefaced by the king’s determinative “Amen I say to you” (vv. 40, 45).<sup>22</sup>

The V. 46 is the conclusion of the scene that pronounces the verdict of the just and the unjust. The just will enjoy the presence of God and the unjust will suffer eternal punishment.

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<sup>18</sup> J.C. FENTON, *Saint Matthew*, 401.

<sup>19</sup> MEIER. J.P., *Gospel According to Matthew*, ABD IV, 634.

<sup>20</sup> W.D. DAVIES — D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 416.

<sup>21</sup> W.D. DAVIES — D. C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 416.

<sup>22</sup> W.D. DAVIES — D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 416.

## 5. Context of the Text

### 5.1 *The Remote Context*

The remote context of our pericope is the revelation of God's salvific love to each human being. (Matt 5: 43; 19: 19; 22: 39). As God loves us, he wants us to love one another without condition. At the *parousia*, failure to practice this love in the form of mercy and charity during our passage in this life on earth makes us to pay for eternal punishment. This scene is in the future tense, meaning that it is something yet to come. Therefore, it is not addressed to the dead but rather to the living the followers of Jesus about the consequence of their acts when they are still living on earth, here and now.

The disciples must be ever vigilant and prepared, and vigilance means above all a life of love and mercy. Three short parables of vigilance in the face of delay preceding our text, the good and the bad servants (24: 45-51), the ten virgins (25: 1-13), the talents (25: 14-30).<sup>23</sup>

The parable of the servant could be addressed to the Christian leaders for not being awaitful the *parousia*. The parable of the virgins warns those who do not think of the delay of the *parousia* that there will be separation between the vigilant and the thoughtless. The last parable of the talents might describe that being vigilant in the case of the delay of the *parousia* means being faithful in doing God's will which is the opposite of inactivity during the delay.

### 5.2 *The Immediate Context*

We need to regard the text immediately before, that is the three parables of vigilance; and the text immediately after is the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ. These texts help us to illuminate our passage.

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<sup>23</sup> J.P. MEIER, *Matthew*, 301.

The text is preceded by the three major parables of vigilance in the face of delay (the good and bad servants, 24: 45-51), (the ten virgins, 25: 1-13), (the talents 25: 14-30.)<sup>24</sup> These parables explain what it means to watch for the coming of the Son of Man.<sup>25</sup> We can realise the reward of those who are faithful or prudent but the wicked who do not watch are punished. The latter are just eating and drinking. They ignore the day or hour of the coming of the Son of Man, consequently they will be weeping and gnashing their teeth.

In the following text, Matt 26, 1-5, on one hand, Jesus gives the prophecy of his dark future.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the chief priests and elders conspire against him, i.e., on how to arrest him secretly and to put him to death (Matt 26, 4). Later on, still in ch. 26, Jesus gives the Eucharist to mark his presence in another way. Finally in 27, he is in court and is killed but in Ch. 28, he rises from the dead and sends his disciples throughout the world in order to make disciples.

For Matthew, the death of the Son Jesus and its symbolic celebration in the Eucharistic meal form the true Passover sacrifice of the new people of God. The one to be sacrificed is, naturally, the Son of Man who has come to serve and give his life as a ransom.<sup>27</sup>

## 6. Source Criticism

According to Gundry<sup>28</sup>, W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, Matt 25: 31-46 is a matthean composition.<sup>29</sup> These scholars support the idea that the evangelist wrote

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<sup>24</sup> J.P. MEIER, *Matthew*, 292-300.

<sup>25</sup> R.H. GUNDRY, *Matthew, A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 495.

<sup>26</sup> W.D. DAVIES — D. C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 436.

<sup>27</sup> MEIER J.P., *Matthew*, 310.

<sup>28</sup> R.H. GUNDRY, *Matthew, A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 511.

<sup>29</sup> W.D. DAVIES — D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 417.

down a parable from his oral tradition.<sup>30</sup> Consequently it has no parallel text in other synoptic gospels, and has specific features characteristic of Matthew such as τότε, which is repeated seven times in the same text (vv.31, 34, 37, 38, 41, 44, 45); συναγωγή (vv. 32, 35, 38, 43) etc.. A few words appear only here in Matthew: ἐρίφος(v.32), is actually an ἀλ<sup>31</sup> in the whole of the New Testament, γυμνός(vv. 36, 38, 43, 44), ἐπισκέπτομαι(vv.36, 43), καταράομαι(v.41), etc... Probably it is from Matthew's community.

Previously in his gospel, Matthew had already many similar parables of separation such as separation of the evildoers and the righteous (Matt 13: 47–50), seeds and weeds (Matt 13: 24–40), the foolish and the wise in the parables of the ten virgins (Matt 25: 1–13). So this discourse of the last judgment is made up of M material, which is moral exhortation, rather than a doctrine.<sup>32</sup>

## 7. Conclusion to the First Chapter

After studying the situation of this text (Matt 25: 31– 46), we have seen that it has no parallel in other synoptic gospels. It means that it is typically Matthean. Nevertheless, the fact that there are similar stories of separation of the wicked and the righteous throughout the gospel of Matthew, this scene of the last judgment is therefore the summary of whole of the Matthew's teaching in his gospel.

This scene of the last judgment is meant to teach the Matthean community on how to behave morally, ethically, and socially while waiting for the second coming of the Lord. Furthermore, since they live a severe persecution from within and

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<sup>30</sup> W.D. DAVIES — D.C. ALLISON, *4 Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 418.

<sup>31</sup> Ἀλ is an ἀρπαξ λεγομενον that appears only once in the whole New Testament.

<sup>32</sup> J.P. MEIER, *Matthew*, 301.

without, this is a way of keeping Christians, i.e. Jews and gentiles converts, to endure these forces that shake their faith. Therefore, in chapter two, we will present the nature and the full exegesis of our pericope. We shall discover Jesus' expectations to his followers while waiting for his second coming as our pericope seems to state.

## CHAPTER II

### EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 25: 31 – 46

#### 1. Introduction

In chapter one, we tried to situate our pericope in the Gospel of Matthew. Then we have shown its delimitations, its textual criticism, its form and structure, its context and its source criticism. The chapter two will bring about the nature of our pericope and its more detailed exegesis. It will explain the intention of Matthew by placing our pericope at the end of Jesus' ministry. It will depict and investigate the views of different biblical scholars. In this way, we shall be able to explain the criterion of the last judgment or Jesus' expectation to each one of us so that one is either put on his right or his left hand. We shall see after that the lot of those who are at the right or left, and the reason why they are in such a place.

#### 2. Nature of Matthew 25: 31 – 46

This pericope is placed at the end of Jesus' ministry. It should need therefore to be understood as Jesus' farewell speech, his testament to his disciples.<sup>33</sup> Jesus is telling his followers on which ground they will be judged on the day of *parousia*. When the time comes they would not be surprised, for they are already aware of the criteria of the judgment. However, in this pericope, the accent is not so much in the

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<sup>33</sup> K. STENDAHL, *Matthew*, 794.

surprise of unconscious goodness or badness,<sup>34</sup> but rather in Jesus' identification with the little ones: the defenceless, the homeless, the poor, the oppressed, the excluded, the voiceless, the disadvantaged, which is emphasised by the sentence: "Truly, I say to you, whenever you did this for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me! ... or did not do it to me" (Matt 25: 40, 45).

The heart of the scene here is based on what one has done or not done to the most unfortunate of the society with whom Jesus has identified himself.

Our pericope is a kind of testament given by Jesus at his departure to the matthean group, which is the mixed one, gentile and Jewish community, cut off from the main Jewish community.<sup>35</sup> It is also understood that Matthew is really concerned with the little ones (Matt 18: 6).

Generally, Matthew wrote his gospel to the Jewish Christians who were disorientated by the growing number of gentiles who were embracing Christianity in his community. He reassured them about their ties to their Jewish heritage by portraying a Jesus who is thoroughly Jewish.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, Matthew also reassured his converted gentiles that Jesus has not come only for the Jews but also for them by associating him with gentiles and praising them.

Matthew included non-Jews in Jesus' genealogy, e.g., Tamar, the widow of Jacob's eldest son (Matt 1: 3); Ruth, the Moabitess, who married Boaz (Ruth 1, 4); Bathseba, mother of Solomon, wife of Uriah, a Hittite (2 Sam 11, 3). Their presence

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<sup>34</sup> K. STENDAHL, *Matthew*, 794.

<sup>35</sup> A.J. SALDARINI, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 68.

<sup>36</sup> S. DONALD, *Matthew's Gospel as an Ethical Guide*, 274.

in the genealogy suggests that more than pure Jewish descent is required to be a leader in Israel. In his gospel, Matthew praised many non-Jews for their acceptance of faith, e.g., the Roman Centurion who recognized Jesus' divinity after his death (Matt 27, 54).

Moreover, Matthew's addressees of his gospel are no longer limited to the Jewish Christians but also to the converted gentiles. For all these positions Matthew's group is no longer within Judaism according to commonsense, sociological or religious-theological criteria.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. Exegesis of Matthew 25, 31 – 46

#### 3.1 *The Parousia*

v. 31a Ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ (When the Son of man comes in his glory): in the O.T., the coming of the Son of man is already referred to in the Book of Daniel 7: 13–14; in this passage, the Son of man is to exercise the power of a judge at the final judgment.<sup>38</sup> Comparing with Matt 24: 27–31, the coming of the Son of man is minimal.<sup>39</sup> It is an enthronement scene of the son of man at the end of time, but the day and the hour are unknown, and the world will be taken by surprise.<sup>40</sup>

v.31b καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ, (and all the angels with him). The angels also play roles on judgment day. Previously, the angels were sent to “gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers” (Matt 13: 41), to “separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire” (Matt 13: 49–50a),

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<sup>37</sup> A.J. SALDARINI, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 68.

<sup>38</sup> D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 356.

<sup>39</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins, A Social and Religious Readings*, 493.

<sup>40</sup> F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 492.

and finally they gather the elect from four winds (Matt 24: 31). Nevertheless, in Matt 25: 31, the angels do not have a specific work to do; they simply accompany the Son of man as a heavenly escort of honour.<sup>41</sup>

v.31c τότε καθίσει ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ· (then he will sit on his glorious throne). Sitting is a position of ruling.<sup>42</sup> When Jesus delivered his sermon on the mount, he was sited (Matt 5: 1); sitting on the throne is therefore to rule, judge, to deliver the decree of the judgment (Matt 19: 28). But here, Jesus is sitting in his glorious throne; it is God's throne<sup>43</sup>, because later on, the Son of man will be replaced by the King in Matt 25: 34, 40.

V. 32a καὶ συναχθήσονται ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, (before him will be gathered all the nations). This is a theological passive,<sup>44</sup> meaning, it is God himself who will gather all the nations (Isa 66: 18). Regarding the "all nations", the scholars have different opinions.

According to Francis W. Beare this phrase—all nations—suggests that on one hand, it is only for the gentiles that are gathered before the judge by taking into consideration the use of ἔθνη (all nations or gentiles) in Jewish terminology, in Hebrew גוֹיִם, meaning the non-Jews. While on the other hand, it is unimaginable that the evangelist should think of God as judging the gentiles by one standard and

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<sup>41</sup> F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 493.

<sup>42</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins, A Social and Religious Readings*, 493.

<sup>43</sup> F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 493.

<sup>44</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins, A Social and Religious Readings*, 493.

the Jews by another.<sup>45</sup> This judgment is therefore exercised to all humankind without distinction neither race nor culture, meaning that the judgment is universal.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.2 *The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (vv.32b – 33)*

V.32b. καὶ ἀφορίσει αὐτοὺς ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων, ὥσπερ ὁ ποιμὴν ἀφορίζει τὰ πρόβατα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐρίφων ( and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats). Goats<sup>47</sup> are recognized as sinister beasts, a disaster to living vegetation (cf. Ezek 34: 18).<sup>48</sup> In Palestine, during the day, sheep and goats graze together (cf. Gen 30: 32), but in the evening the shepherd put the sheep in the folds apart from the goats.<sup>49</sup> The goat is a common symbol of the wicked, whether from its vile smell or from its capricious nature.<sup>50</sup>

The goats deforested Greece and Asia Minor, and modern Israel seeks in vain to discourage Arab goat-herding. Goats, like evil men, the world over and through history ravage, spoil, destroy, and blight the environment.<sup>51</sup>

While the sheep, by its white colour, is the symbol of docility. It is more commercially valuable.<sup>52</sup> This mixture of goats and sheep also can mean that the good people and the bad people, the Jews and the non-Jews, are living together until the last day. God who is symbolized by the shepherd here knows which one is good and which one is evil.

v. 33a καὶ στήσει τὰ μὲν πρόβατα ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ, (and he will place the sheep at his right hand). The right hand (1 Kgs 22: 19) is considered as the place of

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<sup>45</sup> F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 493.

<sup>46</sup> J. ALEXANDER, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 283.

<sup>47</sup> Ἄλ is an ἀρπαξ λεγόμενον that appears only once in the whole New Testament.

<sup>48</sup> E.M. BLAICKLOCK, *Commentary On the New Testament*, 34.

<sup>49</sup> V.O. EDWIN, *A commentary on the New Testament*, 171.

<sup>50</sup> V.O. EDWIN, *A commentary on the New Testament*, 171.

<sup>51</sup> BLAICKLOCK, E.M., *Commentary On the New Testament*, 34.

<sup>52</sup> F.C. FENTON, *Saint Matthew*, 401.

favour<sup>53</sup> and the place of honour.<sup>54</sup> The sheep are those who have conducted themselves in the manner the king expected them to be, specifically, they treated, served and helped the king when he was in need.<sup>55</sup> The sheep in the gospel of Matthew are mostly referred to Israel (Matt 9: 36; 10:6; 15: 24); they are blessed and will inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, since they have fulfilled the standards of life the king expected them to live. So Israel will be called “just” and “blessed” according to the action done to any person in need.<sup>56</sup>

V. 33b. τὰ δὲ ἐρίφια ἐξ εὐωνύμων.(the goats at the left). The word ἐρίφος normally means “kid”, it may therefore represent an animal of less value.<sup>57</sup> Indifference and selfishness to the needy are two vices that put one to the range of a goat or kid. At the end of this little parable of the sheep and the goats, Matthew is now going to tell us the fate of the latter that is the verdict of those who have done good deeds during their earthly lives and those who acted only according to the duty or to the law.

### ***3.3 The Verdict to Those Who Are at His Right Hand (vv.34 – 36)***

v.34a. τότε ἐρεῖ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῖς ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ· (Then the King will say to those at his right hand): The shepherd is the King,<sup>58</sup> like Moses and David.<sup>59</sup> Here, we can realise the change of the noun from the Son of Man in v.31 to King in v34.

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<sup>53</sup> J. ALEXANDER, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 283.

<sup>54</sup> F.C. FENTON, *Saint Matthew*, 401.

<sup>55</sup> A. OVERMAN, *Church and Community in Crisis, The Gospel According to Matthew*, 348.

<sup>56</sup> J.R. DONAHUE, *The Gospel in Parable*, 109.

<sup>57</sup> B.T. VIVIANO, “The Gospel According to Matthew”, *NJBC*, 669.

<sup>58</sup> F.C. FENTON, *Saint Matthew*, 401.

<sup>59</sup> W.D. DAVIES — D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 425.

The change is very abrupt and unexpected.<sup>60</sup> So the Son of Man known as the king is the one who is executing the judgment, furthermore executing his Father's will.<sup>61</sup> His kingship recalls his status as son of David (Matt 2: 2) though his kingship was mocked and questioned (Matt 27: 11, 29, 37 and 42.)

The use of the verb ἐρεῖ which is the verb λέγω, in indicative future active third person singular means that the revelation of the verdict is in future; it is therefore an eschatological event. It is the great change of the ages, a revelation to the whole world, a cosmic event.<sup>62</sup> Therefore this scene will happen at the end of the world.

Here again, the king is speaking to those who are on his right hand, which is the place of favour and honour. In the parable of the wedding banquet, the king passes eschatological judgment against one without a wedding garment (cf. Matt 22: 11–14). If in that parable, the king is God the Father, in this one the king is the Son since he said that: “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me (Matt 28: 18). Here Jesus is the king in the Kingdom of God (cf. Col 1: 13: “the kingdom of his dear Son”).<sup>63</sup>

V34b. δεῦτε οἱ εὐλογημένοι τοῦ πατρὸς μου, (Come, O blessed of my Father) The king who is the enthroned Son of Man of v.31 invites the good to the kingdom of his royal Father. During his earthly mission, Jesus invites people to himself (cf. Matt 11: 28; 22: 4, he invited people to rely on him, and to his earthly

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<sup>60</sup> C.A. WILLOUGHBY, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 265.

<sup>61</sup> B.T. VIVIANO, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 669.

<sup>62</sup> F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 493.

<sup>63</sup> W.D. DAVIES — D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 425.

and heavenly banquet). Nevertheless, in this eschatological invitation, he invites only those who are blessed of his Father. Moreover, Matthew uses two words to qualify those who are God's blessed: first Μακάριοι as in Matt 5: 3–12, second εὐλογημένοι in Matt 21: 9 and 23: 39. In both words, Jesus called them “blessed”. Those are the people whom Jesus is inviting to the kingdom of his heavenly Father.

v.34c. κληρονομήσατε τὴν ἡτοιμασμένην ὑμῖν βασιλείαν ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου. (inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world); the word “inherit” reminds us of the promise made by Isaac to Jacob and his descendants, to inherit the promise of God made to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 27: 29). Since Jacob received the blessing from Isaac who is the son of God's promise, so Jacob inherited God's blessing. In the synoptic gospels, inheritance belongs to the Son of God that refers to Jesus (Matt 21: 38; Mark 12: 7; Luke 20: 14). So, here, those who have done God's will are the children of God and they deserve to inherit the Kingdom of God. Moreover, the idea of the kingdom is a rabbinical theology of the kingdom of the Messiah that was created before the world. The righteous are blessed of that Father who in his eternal degree had foreknown his own and prepared for their happiness.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, many commentators use this phrase—blessed of my Father—to argue that the Father, not the Son of Man, is the real judge.<sup>65</sup> This idea of “prepared from the foundation of the world” is the notion of predestination which implies that God's purpose does not change: it will be the same at the end as in the beginning.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, we can say

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<sup>64</sup> J. ALEXANDER, *The Gospel According to St Matthew*, 283.

<sup>65</sup> D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 356.

<sup>66</sup> W.D. DAVIES–D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 425.

that this future kingdom existed before the foundation of the world. As a matter of fact, the two following verses are the conditions of entering this kingdom.

v.35 ἐπείνασα γὰρ καὶ ἐδώκατέ μοι φαγεῖν, ἐδίψησα καὶ ἐποτίσατέ με; ξένος ἦμην καὶ συνηγάγετέ με (for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me). In this passage, as the Son of Man identifies himself with the cause of all men,<sup>67</sup> the service rendered to the needy is rendered to him, who is the judge.

It is done to Him. This should be understood in the light of the mystical body of Christ, the intimate union of Christ himself with each of his members.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, some scholars think that this act of goodwill was done to the missionaries who live voluntary poverty (cf. Matt 10: 9–31; 1 Cor 4: 11–13; 2 Cor 6: 4–10) and are totally dependant on the hospitality of those among whom they proclaimed the Gospel.<sup>69</sup> In this case, the treatment, which is done to these missionaries, was done to Jesus himself. This passage makes them overcome any difficulties and encourages them to go ahead in front of either hospitality or rejection. But this statement is less probable as a meaning to this pericope.

In fact, it is unlikely that Jesus would identify himself only with missionaries. He must also identify himself in a broader sense, such as to any human being in need. To receive such a one is to receive Christ; and to refuse an aid to such a person is to refuse Christ (cf. Matt 10: 40).<sup>70</sup> These are ordinary things that anyone

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<sup>67</sup> J. ALEXANDER, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 283.

<sup>68</sup> V. O. EDWIN, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, 172.

<sup>69</sup> R.A.H. DOUGLAS, *Matthew*, 290.

<sup>70</sup> C.K. HOWARD, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 640.

can do<sup>71</sup> in daily life: to give food to the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty and to welcome the stranger. It is somehow a challenge to practice such acts of mercy and love in the cities where nothing is free while it might be easier in the villages where people are still keeping their traditional value of hospitality, since these three acts mentioned above are acts of hospitality. The next three acts of mercy are more or less acts done to the poor and the distressed. The latter, whoever they are, they should be regarded as Jesus' brothers and sisters.<sup>72</sup>

The six acts of mercy listed above, i.e. vv.35-36, such as giving food to the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, sheltering the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and visiting the prisoners, which were done to the poor and the vulnerable were done to Jesus himself whose presence is hidden in them since their vulnerability is his vulnerability.<sup>73</sup>

v.36, γυμνός καὶ περιεβάλετέ με ἡσθένησα καὶ ἐπεσκέψασθέ με, ἐν φυλακῇ ἦμην καὶ ἦλθατε πρὸς με. (I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me): A Jewish "shaliach principle"<sup>74</sup> justifies the pagans, the people of different confessions who, although they know not, were serving him (Jesus) by helping those with whom he identifies himself,<sup>75</sup> those in the situations such as (v. 35) hunger, thirst, to be a stranger,<sup>76</sup> (v.36) to be naked, sick or prisoner that make people vulnerable, because on the cross he really

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<sup>71</sup> W. BARKLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 325.

<sup>72</sup> R. A. H. DOUGLAS, *Matthew*, 290.

<sup>73</sup> D. MCBRIDE, *Seasons of the Word, Reflections On the Sunday Readings*, 370.

<sup>74</sup> "Shaliach Jewish principle": A man's representative is as the man himself. This implies that the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoners represent Jesus himself: any act of charity done to these people is directly done to Jesus.

<sup>75</sup> R. A. H. DOUGLAS, *Matthew*, 291.

<sup>76</sup> Abraham is known as a champion of feeding and welcoming the stranger (Gen 18: 1-8).

took each one's place.<sup>77</sup> In the O.T., God himself cares for the weak (cf. Ps 68: 6: God gives the desolate a home to dwell in; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity). In order to be at God's right hand, one needs to share one's food with the hungry, house the homeless, clothe the naked and welcome the stranger.<sup>78</sup> These acts of kindness recall Isa 58: 7: "is it not to share your bread with the hungry, ... and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"

On the other hand, these needy include the missionaries during the time of Matthew's community; it helped them to look beyond their present struggles to the ultimate triumph of God's reign.<sup>79</sup> For Jesus sent his disciples to mission in a very strict way: "Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the labourer deserves his food." (Matt 10:9-10). In this way, distributing food to the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty produces a parallelism and an allusion to the hospitality given by genuine Christians to a fellow disciple who is fleeing persecution<sup>80</sup> (cf. Matt 10: 42).

### ***3.4 The Surprise of Those Who Are at His Right Hand (vv.37 – 39)***

vv. 37-39 τότε ἀποκριθήσονται αὐτῷ οἱ δίκαιοι λέγοντες· κύριε, πότε σε εἶδομεν πεινῶντα καὶ ἐθρέψαμεν, ἢ διψῶντα καὶ ἐποτίσαμεν; πότε δέ σε εἶδομεν ξένον καὶ συνηγάγομεν, ἢ γυμνὸν καὶ περιεβάλομεν; ὅτε δέ σε εἶδομεν ἀσθενοῦντα ἢ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ ἤλθομεν πρὸς σε; (Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And

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<sup>77</sup> S. DE DIETRICH, *Saint Matthew*, 132.

<sup>78</sup> R. BAAWOBR, *Bible Study and Sharing on the Gospel of Matthew from Christian communities*, 135.

<sup>79</sup> W.G. THOMPSON, *Matthew's Story, Good News for Uncertain Times*, 127.

<sup>80</sup> R.H. GUNDRY, *Matthew, A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*, 511.

when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?). It is not naturally obvious to recognize the Son of Man in the most vulnerable. This is why in these verses 37–39 and in v.46, Matthew called those who did the acts of mercy and love “righteous” or δίκαιοι because they are the sons of the kingdom (cf. Matt 13: 38), they are those who do the Father’s will by showing mercy to their neighbour.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, in these three verses 37–39, “you” or thee (RSV) is emphasized in each phrase.<sup>82</sup> This question of the righteous “Lord, when did we see thee...” brings us to another point that the “just” or the righteous are not simply the followers of Jesus but also those millions of people who have never heard of Christ; whose service was rendered to the Lord Jesus unknowingly. They are the righteous outside the Church<sup>83</sup> from our today’s point of view. Their surprise was due to the fact that they cannot understand how they could have done such acts of mercy to the Son of Man.<sup>84</sup>

The surprise of the righteous in our text accomplishes a rupture with legalism, for a legalistic system is always imperilled when people cannot have an exact knowledge of the worth of their works in order, in turn, to nourish their righteousness in self-consciousness.<sup>85</sup>

The acts of love and mercy enumerated in this scene are just the simple deeds of mercy and compassion done to the “least” ones: “feeding the hungry, giving drinks to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, visiting those imprisoned.”<sup>86</sup> Due to these acts, we shall see in the next verse the response of the King to the people who have performed these acts.

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<sup>81</sup> J.P. MEIER, *The Vision of Matthew, Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel*, 177.

<sup>82</sup> F.D. BRUNER, *Matthew*, 920.

<sup>83</sup> W.D. DAVIES — D.C. ALLISON. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 428.

<sup>84</sup> D. J. HARRINGTON. *The Gospel of Matthew*, 357.

<sup>85</sup> F.D. BRUNER. *Matthew*, 923.

<sup>86</sup> B.E. BOWE, *The Criteria for Judgment in the Gospel in the Gospel of Matthew*, 299.

### 3.5 *The Answer of the King (v. 40)*

v.40. καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐρεῖ αὐτοῖς· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐφ' ὅσον ἐποιήσατε ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων, ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε. “And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”

In all the speeches of Jesus, “truly, I say to you...” is specific in Jesus’ sayings and it introduces the most important truth in an incident.<sup>87</sup> Ἀμὴν, in Hebrew אָמֵן, means firm, solid and hundred per cent true, confirms truth<sup>88</sup> that will not be revoked. This truth is that even doing good actions to an individual who is the least of Jesus’ brother or sister is crucially important because it can bring one to salvation since those good actions were done to the King and Judge himself. But the question is: “who are these least of Jesus’ brothers?”

As we have seen earlier, “the least of these my brethren” can be referred to the Christians (either missionaries or disciples)<sup>89</sup> or to everyone in need, whether Christian or not.<sup>90</sup> In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus’ brethren referred specially to his disciples.<sup>91</sup> These people, i.e. the little ones and Christians, are extremely important because of their identification with Jesus. This is why the two Church fathers, i.e. Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, acknowledge that: “when you saw a brother,

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<sup>87</sup> F.D. BRUNER, *Matthew*, 922.

<sup>88</sup> Course in Readings in Hebrew Old Testament 2004 by Cantore.

<sup>89</sup> D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 357, see also Matt 10: 40-42; 18: 6, 14.

<sup>90</sup> W.D. DAVIES · · D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 428.

<sup>91</sup> *Jesus' brethren*, according to Matt 12: 48–50, are those who do the will of his Father: the disciples in Matt 28: 10; the little ones in Matt 10: 42, 18: 5; any believer in Matt 18: 6, 10, 14.

you saw the Lord.”<sup>92</sup> What Jesus is expecting to each one of humanity is not something spectacular or extraordinary but something that each one can do, something that happens in daily life and whenever one does it to one of the least of Jesus’ brethren, it is done to Jesus. The next verse helps us to think of the fate of those who are at the King’s left hand.

### ***3.6 The King’s Verdict to Those Who Are at His Left Hand (v.41)***

v. 41, τε ἐρεῖ καὶ τοῖς ἐξ εὐωνύμων· πορεύεσθε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ [οἱ] κατηραμένοι εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον τὸ ἠτοιμασμένον τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ. (Then he will say to those at his left hand, depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels). This would be an ultimate sentence<sup>93</sup> that Jesus will pronounce to those who ignore him in the person of his disciples today and in those who are most in need.

The word “depart from me” (πορεύεσθε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ), contains a meaning of separation from the judge who is the King and the Son of Man; the relationship with Jesus is cut off. They are at the same time cursed and condemned. They depart into what was not prepared for them.<sup>94</sup> This place, i.e. eternal fire, is prepared for the devil and his angels. In contrast with verse 34, where the kingdom was prepared for the righteous, while here in verse 41, the cursed are going to the eternal fire, a fate that was not meant to be theirs.<sup>95</sup> The fire<sup>96</sup> in this context has a meaning of “hell”. The only problem is the translation of the Greek word αἰώνιον, that can mean eternal or eternity in this case the cursed are put in an eternal fire or it can mean

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<sup>92</sup> F.D. BRUNER, *Matthew*, 923.

<sup>93</sup> R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 358.

<sup>94</sup> R.H. GUNORY, *Matthew, A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*, 515.

<sup>95</sup> R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 358.

<sup>96</sup> The word *fire* here has a meaning of hell, see Matt 5: 22; 13: 42,50; 18: 8-9.

annihilation,<sup>97</sup> the cursed in this case are totally destroyed. The reason for being cursed by the king is the lack of concern to Jesus' identification.

### **3.7 *The Reasons for the Condemnation (vv.42 – 43)***

vv.42–43, ἐπέινασα γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἔδωκατέ μοι φαγεῖν ἐδίψησα καὶ οὐκ ἐποτίσατέ με, ξένος ἦμην καὶ οὐ συνηγάγετέ με, γυμνὸς καὶ οὐ περιεβάλετέ με, ἀσθενὴς καὶ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ οὐκ ἐπεσκέψασθέ με. (for I was hungry and you gave me no food, was thirsty and you gave me no drink. I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me). Matthew clearly puts the reasons for condemnation.<sup>98</sup> The cursed are not accused of crimes or offences on a grand scale,<sup>99</sup> but it is just a lack of responding to a person in need. Since Jesus identifies himself with these little ones, whatever is done to them is done to him, and whatever is not done to them is not done to him. In this case, the cursed failed to love the poor in concrete deeds of mercy.<sup>100</sup>

Vv. 42–43 are parallel lines drawn from vv. 35–36; the only difference is that the blessed were concerned about Jesus and the cursed were not.

### **3.8 *The Surprise of Those Who Are at his Left Hand (vv.44 – 45)***

v.44, ὅτε ἀποκριθήσονται καὶ αὐτοὶ λέγοντες· κύριε, πότε σε εἶδομεν πεινῶντα ἢ διψῶντα ἢ ξένον ἢ γυμνὸν ἢ ἀσθενῆ ἢ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ οὐ διηκονήσαμέν σοι; (Then they also will answer, Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?). The accused try to justify themselves by attempting a defence, but they only express their

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<sup>97</sup> R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 358.

<sup>98</sup> R.H. GUNDRY, *Matthew, A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*, 515.

<sup>99</sup> D. MCBRIDE, *Seasons of the Word, Reflections On the Sunday Readings*, 371.

<sup>100</sup> W.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gracious Word*, 202.

helplessness in front of the King. At least here, they recognize that the judge is the Lord.<sup>101</sup> They never knew that the needy were actually the king, i.e. the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoners, but they failed to meet his needs.<sup>102</sup> But the problem is not so much to not serve Lord in the needy. God is not selfish; the problem is that they were selfish and they never attended the poor. The answer of the Lord, in the next verse, proves their helpless attempt of defence.

v. 45, ὅτε ἀποκριθήσεται αὐτοῖς λέγων· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐφ' ὅσον οὐκ ἐποιήσατε ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων, οὐδὲ ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε. (Then he will answer them, truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me). In this verse, the Lord needs to tell the cursed their failure to attend the needy. The Son of the most high (Luke 1: 32) is found in low human.<sup>103</sup> Most of the time, the latter is powerless, vulnerable in the society.

They did not know that the King identifies himself with every needy and the suffering individuals. So they have to hear him say that to fail to help their needy fellow-men was to fail to minister to the King their Lord.<sup>104</sup>

### 3.9 *The Final Verdict (v.46)*

v.46, καὶ ἀπελεύσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. (And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.) Here, the sentence is final.<sup>105</sup> In Matthew, “Eternal punishment” occurs only here,<sup>106</sup> while eternal life can be seen in Matt 19: 6, 29.

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<sup>101</sup> V. F. FLOYD, *A Commentary on the Gospel According St. Matthew*, 268.

<sup>102</sup> R.H. GUNDY, *Matthew, A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*, 515.

<sup>103</sup> F.D. BRUNER, *A Commentary on the Gospel According St. Matthew*, 927.

<sup>104</sup> V. F. FLOYD, *A Commentary on the Gospel According St. Matthew*, 268.

<sup>105</sup> V. F. FLOYD, *A Commentary on the Gospel According St. Matthew*, 268.

<sup>106</sup> W.D. DAVIES — D.C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 432.

“Eternal punishment” is somehow controversial among the scholars because some see the word αἰώνιον as “everlasting” instead of “eternal”, in this case the “hell” consists of endless conscious torment,<sup>107</sup> while those who admit that αἰώνιον is translated as eternal, they see hell as an annihilation<sup>108</sup> or total destruction.

#### 4. Conclusion to the Second Chapter

After a close examination of the exegetical analysis, we can say that the criterion of the definitive separation, according to this pericope, is not constituted by being the church membership,<sup>109</sup> on the knowledge we have amassed, or the fame we have acquired, or the fortune we have gained,<sup>110</sup> but by the deeds of love and mercy that we have done to the most vulnerable especially the needy and the persecuted<sup>111</sup> who are Christ’s identification. And the condemnation is not so much due to having done anything wicked but for having failed to do good.<sup>112</sup> It is therefore not enough to fulfil our duties in our daily lives, we need to do a disinterested work of love and mercy to our neighbours without expecting a return service. In this way, Christ will invite us in eternal life, which is the opposite of eternal punishment.

After having seen the exegesis of our pericope, we are now going to see the third chapter, which will be dedicated in bringing about the message of this pericope to Matthew’s contemporaries and to us, its challenges today. At the end, we shall see how some of the activities of the spiritan congregation answer the expectations of the needy.

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<sup>107</sup> R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 358.

<sup>108</sup> R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 358.

<sup>109</sup> J.P. MEIER, *The Vision of Matthew, Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel*, 177.

<sup>110</sup> W. BARKLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 325.

<sup>111</sup> E. SCHWEITZER, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 476.

<sup>112</sup> E. SCHWEITZER, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 478.

## CHAPTER III

### MESSAGE OF Matt 25: 31 – 46 AND ITS APPLICATION

#### 1. Introduction

In chapter two, we intended to present mainly the exegesis of our pericope. We have seen on one hand, why those who are at Jesus' right hand are called "blessed"; and on the other hand those who are at his left hand are called "cursed". We are now going to point out its message to Matthew's Christian contemporaries and also to us today on how to prepare for the imminent coming of the Lord since nobody knows the day and the time (Matt 24: 42). This message of our pericope will lead us to see the realities of life of the marginalized, of those who are persecuted, divided because of the proclamation of the Gospel, and how Matthew's contemporary Christians dealt with it.

Similarly, we need to understand the message of this text to us today and to apply it to a particular situation in preparation to the coming of the Lord. We should we tackle the reasons behind the impoverishment of the people of our time, after that we shall see the challenges of this text to us. Finally we shall give an example of a particular situation among many on how to love the marginalized, and to bring them back to Jesus, i.e. street children in Madagascar and refugees in Kigoma (Tanzania).

## 2. Message of Matt 25: 31–46

### 2.1 To Matthew's Christian Contemporaries

Matthew, while writing his gospel after A.D. 70, does not intend to confuse the destruction of Jerusalem with the outstanding parousia.<sup>113</sup> He is writing to his community which is affected by division<sup>114</sup> and persecution.<sup>115</sup> In Matthew's perspective, anyone who persecutes Jesus' disciples persecutes Jesus himself.<sup>116</sup> He is encouraging his community to perform an act of charity to those who are victims of the persecution because of their proclamation of the Good News:

Those who are imprisoned because of their teaching are visited by the newly converted members of the community (2 Tim 1: 16–17), tribulation like those cited here are also listed in 2 Cor 11: 23, 27,30, where Paul's missionary labours are depicted.<sup>117</sup>

The Jews thought that the destruction of the temple and the ruin of the city of Jerusalem were connected with the coming of the Lord.<sup>118</sup> So, this eschatological discourse would help his community to prepare for the imminent coming of the Lord. They need to wait for the coming of the Lord actively by being engaged in keeping God's commandment which is the Love of God and the neighbour as oneself (Luke 10: 27). In this way, the Matthean community is celebrating the actual presence of the risen Lord in his brothers and sisters who are in need. In so doing, it helps them to be watchful, ready and faithful.<sup>119</sup> If God is present in these little ones, this means that God's reality is revealed in the realization of human relationships

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<sup>113</sup> J.P. MEIER, *Gospel of Matthew*, 634.

<sup>114</sup> J.P. MEIER, *Gospel of Matthew*, 638.

<sup>115</sup> J. RADERMAKERS, *Au Fil de l'Évangile Selon St. Matthew*, 317.

<sup>116</sup> E. SCHWEITZER, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 477.

<sup>117</sup> E. SCHWEITZER, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 478.

<sup>118</sup> J. RADERMAKERS, *Au Fil de l'Évangile Selon St. Matthew*, 319.

<sup>119</sup> W.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gracious Word Commentary On Sunday and Holy Day Readings*, 202.

among the fellow human beings, giving a drink to the thirsty, feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger.<sup>120</sup> In this case, Christians need to understand that:

Christ still suffers in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. To pay attention to them is to pay attention to the broken body of Christ. And to do that is to be welcomed as blessed of God, because it is to live as community of mercy.<sup>121</sup>

Matthew's community was challenged to live a brotherly love in the world of division between Judaism and Christianity, where Christians were accused of being the troublemakers of the society. The Roman authority became suspicious of the Christians and started persecuting them. One of the many ways to live Christianity was to welcome those who were misplaced by persecution. At the same time, Christ asked his followers to love one another as he loved them.

Matthew wrote this story in order to inspire the fear of God in the hearers and to motivate them to do the will of God while they still have the opportunity before the judgment comes upon them.<sup>122</sup>

## ***2.2 Message of Matthew for Us Today***

This text still has a message for us today as Christians. We learn from the Creed and from the N.T. that Jesus will come back again to judge the living and the dead (Acts 10: 42b). Furthermore, our text in discussion says that Jesus is coming in the future (Matt 25: 31). Before he left us his word, he gave us through his disciples the condition to remain in communion with him (cf. love of God and love of neighbour as oneself (Mark 12: 33). Most of us think that to sin means doing

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<sup>120</sup> W.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gracious Word Commentary On Sunday and Holy Day Readings*, 202.

<sup>121</sup> D. MCBRIDE, *Seasons of the Word. Reflections On the Sunday Readings*. 371.

<sup>122</sup> R.B. HAYS, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament, A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*, 107.

something wrong, which is called “sins of commission,”<sup>123</sup> but to the contrary, the accusation of the cursed is rather based on the actions that they have failed to do (Matt 25: 42–43) and these are called the sins of “omission.”<sup>124</sup>

In every country today, there are thousands of people who go to bed hungry and cannot afford a single meal a day,<sup>125</sup> cannot afford medical treatment. This is the case of those who are sick of HIV/positive, malaria, tuberculosis, cancer etc. There are, at the same time, millions of people who are homeless because of civil wars, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, prisoners treated in inhuman conditions as they await trials.<sup>126</sup> What can we do as Christians to help these marginalized people and what method could we use in order to work out efficiently?

By this very fact, it is not enough to do the acts of love and mercy to the marginalized, we need to tackle the issue from the very roots of the injustices done to the most vulnerable and at the same time we need to know what is justice.

To face these problems, we can learn from Gustavo Gutiérrez firstly about the theology of liberation then secondly about the justice and the injustice and how to fight against the injustice.

The theology of liberation stresses three points: “Communion and brotherhood as the ultimate meaning of human life; the insistence on a love which is

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<sup>123</sup> J. MOORE, *Good News From Matthew*, 82.

<sup>124</sup> J. MOORE, *Good News From Matthew*, 82.

<sup>125</sup> R. BAAWOBR, *Bible Study and Sharing on the Gospel of Matthew For Christian Communities*, 136.

<sup>126</sup> R. BAAWOBR, *Bible Study and Sharing on the Gospel of Matthew For Christian Communities*, 135.

manifested in concrete actions, with “doing” being favoured over simple knowing; and the revelation of the human mediation necessary to reach the Lord.”<sup>127</sup>

This means that as pastors of God’s Church, and also as Christians, we need tackle the roots of the problem in the respective countries where we are appointed as ministers. In this case, we need to define the “just” and the “unjust” in our term today. Still according to Gutiérrez, stated by Bussmann:

“Just” are precisely those who hunger and thirst for justice, who become efficaciously involved with the hungry, the thirsty, the cold, the lonely, the sick and the oppressed.<sup>128</sup>

As agents of the Catholic Church, we need to fight anything that oppresses our fellow human beings. Pope Paul VI, in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, states clearly that the Church has a task of liberating people, without exclusion, from everything which condemns them to remain on the margins of life:

Famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices in international relations and especially in commercial exchanges, situations of economic and cultural neo-colonialism sometimes as cruel as the old political colonialism.<sup>129</sup>

In this way, the Church as a whole is participating in the concerns of people individually and collectively. The Church has the tools to fight injustices by its ecclesiastical administrations and by the faithful who are experts in so many political fields or even active members of the governments in many parts of the world. In this way, Christians and the pastors of the Church need to encourage and remind one another about this responsibility of not forgetting Christ’s identification, which are the marginalized.

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<sup>127</sup> C. BUSSMANN, *Who do you say Jesus Christ in Latin American Theology*, 82.

<sup>128</sup> C. BUSSMANN, *Who do you say Jesus Christ in Latin American Theology*, 83.

<sup>129</sup> PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41.

Unfortunately, very often Christians are participating in oppressing Jesus' little ones by being indifferent in the realities that oppress citizens especially in political, social and economical matters. In this way, especially in the third world countries, the rich become richer and the poor become poorer, ignoring the definition of unjust as follows: "Correlatively, the unjust are not only those who commit injustice, but also those who are indifferent to oppression."<sup>130</sup>

We can see by the very facts which we have just mentioned that our concerns towards the poor are crucial in our Christian life for the preparation of the second coming of Christ. It is one of the reasons of Jesus' preaching; to care for the needy and the poor. To do the opposite is to oppress Jesus himself and it is injustice towards himself.

In the next part, we are going to see the challenges that drive us towards a good relationship with Jesus and our fellow human beings.

### **3. Challenges of Matthew 25: 31– 46 Today**

It is not surprising if the criterion for the final judgment is about the way one attends to others who are in need. Jesus saw that each human being needs God's love. In John 15: 12–13. Jesus has given us a new commandment: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

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<sup>130</sup> C. BUSSMANN, *Who do you say Jesus Christ in Latin American Theology*, 83.

This statement of Jesus implies that, as his followers, we need to follow him in his passion, death and until his resurrection.<sup>131</sup> This means that we need to love others even till the point of giving our life in order to save, to seek the happiness and the success of our neighbours. In this case, how far are we ready to love our neighbours as much as we love ourself and God that seem to be stated by the synoptic gospels (Matt 22:37, 39; Mark 12: 30–31, 33; Luke 10: 27).

Naturally, it is easier to go to Church than to attend a beggar who is knocking at the door asking for food, money for a medical bill or for school fees or even for bus fare to go somewhere. In this case, the needy seem to disturb our timetable, our comfort and our standards of life: “the challenge is to recognize God in them and to show our love by what we do and not merely in word.”<sup>132</sup>

Furthermore, we therefore need to raise an awareness of the complex situations of the world that make the poor poorer and the rich richer. This is totally contrary to the vocation of the Church that is to be present in the heart of the world by proclaiming the good news to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted.<sup>133</sup>

In our part, we start by what depends on us just as proposed by the synod of the bishops:

Christians’ specific contribution to justice is the day-to-day life of the believer acting like the leaven of the Gospel in his family, his school, his work and his social and civil work.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> J. RADERMAKERS, *Au Fil de l’Evangile Selon St. Matthew*, 319.

<sup>132</sup> R. BAAWOBR, *Bible Study and Sharing on the Gospel of Matthew For Christian Communities*, 135.

<sup>133</sup> VATICAN II, *Justice in the world*, ed. A. Flannery, 696.

<sup>134</sup> VATICAN II, *Justice in the world*, ed. A. Flannery, 704.

In this case, it is true that charity begins at home but should not end there.<sup>135</sup> In this way, when each family is doing so, all human persons will benefit from it, even though this seems to be a very long enterprise. It is our Christian calling to be generous to each one, i.e. the love of the neighbour as oneself (Matt 12: 33).

It is not enough to be charitable to the beggars that we meet on the streets. That would lead their lives to remain in perpetual poverty and dependence. On the contrary as Christians, movements such as Small Christian Communities, women's groups, men's group, visitation ministries and many other lay ministries,<sup>136</sup> Scouts, etc., could raise an alarm to the competent authority that is able to do something about the increasing number of the marginalized. Each adult person could be encouraged to work, to find a job even to start with the humblest ones, as Pope John Paul II said: "work thus belongs to the vocation of every person; indeed, man expresses and fulfils himself by working."<sup>137</sup>

However, there are cases like that of the street children and refugees who are victims of the political systems, civil wars whereby most of them have nothing or lost everything. There are congregations that are dealing with such cases. The Spiritan congregation is one of them. So in the next part, we would like to show these two of the many examples on how to apply Matt 25: 31 – 46 in a concrete situation: street children and refugee ministries.

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<sup>135</sup> D.B. WILFRED., *The Student's Companion*, 67.

<sup>136</sup> Apostles of Jesus AIDS ministries, in *Fields Afar*, Christmas 2004, 10.

<sup>137</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *On the Human Person, at the Centre of the Society*, 15.

## 4. Application of Matt 25: 31 – 46 to the Spiritan Charism

### 4.1 Care for the Most Vulnerable

One of the Spiritan aspects of spirituality is the option for the poor<sup>138</sup>, in which the Spiritans are called to be the advocates, defenders and the supporters of the weak and “little ones” against those who oppress them.<sup>139</sup> It is therefore part of the spiritan charism to take care of the marginalized. However, we will take examples of two cases among many others: i.e. the street children in Madagascar; and the refugees in Kigoma; refugees from Burundi and Rwanda<sup>140</sup> fleeing from the genocide of 1994. The pastoral needs are material, psychological and spiritual.<sup>141</sup>

In order to undertake such work, there is a need of constant conversion on the part of the Spiritan confreres who are the companions of these marginalized people to go towards them. One needs to be gentle and humble of heart. The missionaries who are the companions, with the help of others such as the NGOs,<sup>142</sup> go to the refugee camps, to the street, to the homeless, and take initiatives such as regrouping them then engaging in activities leading to acquire a long lasting profession, i.e. carpentry, masonry, farming, mechanics, electronics etc. In that way, the refugees are repatriated, the rebuilding of their lives is facilitated; and for the street children, when they reach their maturity and independency, by having a profession they can form a family.

The case study of the street children proves that the poverty and misfortune of these children are

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<sup>138</sup> B. KELLY, *Francis Libermann and the Poor*, 17.

<sup>139</sup> *Règle de Vie Spiritaine*, 15.

<sup>140</sup> V. BABU, « *Tanzanie (Kigoma)* », *Pentecôte sur le monde*, 818, Nov–Dec. 2004 : 18–19.

<sup>141</sup> P. MASSAWE, « *Ministère Auprès des Réfugiés dans la Province d’Afrique de l’Est* », 39.

<sup>142</sup> NGOs Non-Governmental Organisations.

provoked by structural problems including corruption and the gross misuse of power. In other words, poverty and the consequent sufferings, injustice, discrimination and inequality are a direct result of political, social and economical structures: they have not come by chance but have been created.<sup>143</sup>

In the centre for rehabilitation of street children in Antananarivo, i.e. Centre Nouveau Relai des Jeunes, the Companion<sup>144</sup> and the other colleagues firstly welcome these children. Then rooms and meals are offered. The Companion is to make sure that he is with them, lives with them, walks beside them, listens to them and shares Christian faith with them.<sup>145</sup> for they are broken people.

The heart of the relationship with the marginalized and the needy is love, mercy and compassion. As soon as the newcomers feel at home, the opportunities to restart their life are offered. The Companion needs to have compassion towards them. And the more we are exposed to the suffering of others the deeper our compassion usually grows.

#### ***4.2 Method Practiced in Helping the Marginalized***

Presence is definitely not enough; there must be something more practical, and something like follow up. Once the refugees or the street children are welcomed, it is the habit of the camp or the Centre to know more about them, asking them about themselves.

Regarding the case of the refugees, the members of the families are scattered, husband, wife, children and parents.<sup>146</sup> One can be moved to compassion by their

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<sup>143</sup> *Methodology of Spiritan JPIC Animation*, 40.

<sup>144</sup> Companion: Missionary who is in charge of the Centre.

<sup>145</sup> *Methodology of Spiritan JPIC Animation*, 33.

<sup>146</sup> P. MASSAWE, *Ministère Auprès des Réfugiés dans la Province d'Afrique de l'Est*, 40.

stories about their misery, their confusion and their hopelessness and also the hope of the refugee victims of civil war: “if I do not forgive, the war will never end.”<sup>147</sup>

In the case of the street children, at the end of the interview, they are asked about the specialisation they want to undertake since the centre offers specialisation in carpentry, pottery, masonry, farming, mechanics and electronics. There are elders and professionals who take care of the newcomers. They teach them and help them to get used of the tools then to acquire the necessary skills. The member of the centre can stay there as long as they wish until they feel independent, until they find a job and their life situation is stable. Only then, they can be able to found a family and able to pay their own house rent.

#### ***4.3 Joy and Advantage in Serving the Poor***

It is first of all to bring back hope, reconciliation, psychological healing, and mostly the dignity that was lost by different hopeless circumstances to the refugees. The Church is the right instrument for these matters.

For the case of the street children, when they reach the age of maturity, the Companion who is the missionary in charge has a happiness to see them experts and being in the profession that they have chosen and the latter has formed for it at least for many years. They can be now employed by the big industries in the skills in which they are specialised.

It is a joy to see them leave the camp and Centre peacefully with some abilities to restart their lives, able to get married or to return to their families, and

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<sup>147</sup> Testimony given by Mulokozi, a refugee, to Fr. Vedastus Babu; cf. V. BABU, “Tanzanie (Kigoma)”, 19.

having a family and usually the priest in charge has a joy to bless the marriages of some among them. Usually they remain the friends of the camp or the Centre and they are also willing to teach the young ones according to their possibility and the possibility of the camp or Centre .

What brings more happiness and encouragement than to think that Jesus would say one day to those who are involved in such work, to make sure that it functions properly: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me (Matt 25: 40)”

### **5. Conclusion to the Third Chapter**

Our pericope, for Matthew’s contemporary Christians, meant to be ethical, expressing their concerns to everybody since Jesus died for the love of the whole world (cf. 2 Cor 5: 14 – 15) and of each individual (cf. Rom 14: 15; 1 Cor 8: 11) while waiting for his second coming. And this is the criterion for his judgment.

Moreover, we ought to do more than charity towards the poor, finding an appropriate place for their rehabilitations, i.e. to fight against the political, economical, social systems that oppress them.

We have also seen that the injustices created by the selfish political leaders and the selfish citizens or the lack of concern to one another could increase the number of the homeless. It our duty, as pastors of God’s church and as Christians to challenge these injustices and at the same to bring back to normal life those who are already victims of these systems. The examples of the rehabilitation of the street children in Madagascar and refugee camp in Kigoma show us that it is possible to do something more than what we have seen in this essay.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

In concluding our study, it is important to point out that this passage of the last judgment (Matt 25: 31 – 46) is central to Matthew's religious, moral, ethical and social teaching in the daily life of his community. It helps them to live according to God's expectations and at the same time to make them as well be ready for the second coming of Christ

Moreover, our salvation or our condemnation, in eschatological time will be our attitude towards the poor and the needy, either hospitable or refusal, is translated as our attitude toward the Lord since he is present in each person, especially in the defenceless and voiceless. And our judgment will be based on the deeds of love and mercy that we have done to them since they are Christ's identification.

The surprise in this pericope is that the condemned have not done any wicked deeds but they have failed to do good to the needy. Christian life is therefore not a matter of fulfilling Christian duties but loving others as much as we can, as God loves us. However, even though Matthew would seem to insist in *doing*, Jesus expects from us a change of heart or *metanoia* (Mk 1: 15) for the preparation of his second coming.

Today, there are still situations that make people poor, deprived of their right, even their life. The question is how far am I ready to fight against the situation such as the political, economical, social systems that oppressed the poor and the needy and favour only the rich? And how far am I ready to bring my help to those who are already affected by such systems?

## APPENDIX 1: ABBREVIATIONS

A.D.	Anno Domini
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
doc.	document
cf.	<i>confer</i> : compare
Col	Colossians
e.g.	exempli gratia; for example
ed.	edited by
Ezek	Ezekiel
Gen	Genesis
GK NT	Greek New Testament
i.e.	id est – that is
Isa	Isaiah
JPIC	Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation
JBC	Jerome Biblical Commentary
Matt	Matthew
NT	New Testament
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NRJ	Nouveau Relai des Jeunes
OAA	Orphelin Apprentis d’Auteil
Ps	Psalms
RSV	Revised Standard Version
St.	Saint
1 Cor	First Corinthians
1 kgs	First Book of Kings
2 Cor	Second Corinthians
2 Sam	Second Book of the Prophet Samuel
2 Tim	Second Letter to Timothy

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## APPENDIX 3: THE TEXT OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT

### Matthew 25: 31 – 46

31 "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. 34 Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink?' 38 And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? 39 And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' 45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' 46 And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

31 "Όταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ, τότε καθίσει ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ· 32 καὶ συναθροῦνται ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, καὶ ἀφορίσει αὐτοὺς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, ὡπερ ὁ ποιμὴν ἀφορίζει τὰ πρόβατα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐρίφων, 33 καὶ στήσει τὰ μὲν πρόβατα ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ, τὰ δὲ ἐρίφια ἐξ εὐωνύμων. 34 τότε ἐρεῖ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῖς ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ· δεῦτε οἱ εὐλογημένοι τοῦ πατρὸς μου, κληρονομήσατε τὴν ἡτοιμασμένην ὑμῖν βασιλείαν ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου. 35 ἐτείνασα γὰρ καὶ ἔδωκατέ μοι φαγεῖν, ἐδίψησα καὶ ἐποτίσατέ με, ξένος ἦμην καὶ συνηγάγετέ με, 36 γυμνὸς καὶ περιεβάλετέ με, ἠσθένησα καὶ ἐπεσκέψασθέ με, ἐν φυλακῇ ἦμην καὶ ἦλθατε πρὸς με. 37 τότε ἀποκριθήσονται αὐτῷ οἱ δίκαιοι λέγοντες· κύριε, πότε σε εἶδομεν τεινῶντα καὶ ἐθρέψαμεν, ἢ διψῶντα καὶ ἐποτίσαμεν; 38 πότε δέ σε εἶδομεν ξένον καὶ συνηγάγομεν, ἢ γυμνὸν καὶ περιεβάλομεν; 39 πότε δέ σε εἶδομεν ἀσθενοῦντα ἢ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ ἦλθομεν πρὸς σε; 40 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐρεῖ αὐτοῖς· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐφ' ὅσον ἐποιήσατε ἐνὶ τούτῳ τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων, ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε. 41 τότε ἐρεῖ καὶ τοῖς ἐξ εὐωνύμων· πορεύεσθε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ [οἱ] καταραμένοι εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον τὸ ἡτοιμασμένον τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ. 42 ἐτείνασα γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἔδωκατέ μοι φαγεῖν, ἐδίψησα καὶ οὐκ ἐποτίσατέ με, 43 ξένος ἦμην καὶ οὐ συνηγάγετέ με, γυμνὸς καὶ οὐ περιεβάλετέ με, ἀσθενὴς καὶ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ οὐκ ἐπεσκέψασθέ με. 44 τότε ἀποκριθήσονται καὶ αὐτοὶ λέγοντες· κύριε, πότε σε εἶδομεν τεινῶντα ἢ διψῶντα ἢ ξένον ἢ γυμνὸν ἢ ἀσθενῆ ἢ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ οὐ διηκονήσαμέν σοι; 45 τότε ἀποκριθήσεται αὐτοῖς λέγων· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐφ' ὅσον οὐκ ἐποιήσατε ἐνὶ τούτῳ τῶν ἐλαχίστων, οὐδὲ ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε. 46 καὶ ἀπελεύσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

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