

Each week for the summer, a parishioner will reflect on a section of Pope Francis' Call to Holiness: his new Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Be Glad)*, which you can read at <http://w2.vatican.va>

In the Light of the Master: The Great Criterion
(paragraphs 95-108)

In Chapter 3 of his Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Francis considers Jesus' charge to be merciful and treat with compassion "the least of these" – the hungry, sick, poor, strangers... It is a beautiful reminder of one of the simplest tenets, yet one that seems difficult for our society to put into consistent practice.

Pope Francis shares what he calls "The Great Criterion," the standard that defines our holiness and dedication to Christ, and will be the key measurement at our final judgment: What have we done for others? [¶104]

"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25: 35-36).

Pope Francis asks us to accept this charge in a spirit of genuine openness, "without any 'ifs or buts' that could lessen their force. Our Lord made it very clear that holiness cannot be understood or lived apart from these demands, for mercy is 'the beating heart of the Gospel.'" [¶97]

He reminds us of Saint John Paul II's words: "...we must learn to see [Christ] especially in the faces of those with whom he himself wished to be identified.' In this call to recognize Jesus in the poor and the suffering, we see revealed the very heart of Christ." [¶96]

For most, this is easier said than done. Pope Francis declares that "hedonism and consumerism can prove our downfall, for when we are obsessed with our own pleasure, we end up being all too concerned about ourselves and our rights." [¶108]

Instead, let us follow Jesus' teaching and do more for "the least of these."

—Karin Gaffney Christensen