

Fr. O'Connor's Homily November 22, 2020
Feast of Christ The King

My grandfather was born in Albany in 1860. I never met him but I was told that he was a tough character. I sometimes wonder about his father and mother. They must have come to Albany from Ireland in the 1850's. They were "famine Irish". They were escaping the horrible potato famine which was a period of mass starvation and disease in Ireland from 1845-1852. I wonder, were they starving when they left Ireland? When they reached American shores did they experience the horrible prejudice that so many Irish and Catholics experienced when they arrived here? Were they homeless and penniless when they arrived?

Fr. Charles Onyeneke was the only person ordained a priest for the Albany diocese this year. He has been assigned to Blessed Sacrament by our Bishop. But he will be returning to Nigeria, his native land, tomorrow. His immigration status must be updated so he must leave our country for 6 months and then reapply for a visa. This is painful for him and for many of us.

Today is the last Sunday of the Church year and it is crowned by the Feast of Christ the King. But today's Gospel tells us a different story. Jesus is the starving person, the stranger, the homeless person, the prisoner, the person dying of thirst. Jesus is telling us that whatever we do for these people we are doing for Him. If we don't recognize Him, He says "Depart from me".

Pope Francis has spoken frequently about immigrants. Each year the Pope and the entire Catholic Church celebrate the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. The Pope reminds us that immigrants and refugees must be welcomed. He tells us that the Bible "urges us to welcome the stranger, it tells us that in so doing we open our doors to God.

We are aware that there is a strong anti-immigrant, anti-refugee sentiment in our country. It is contrary to the teaching, contrary to the very person of Jesus.

Today or soon, go back to the pictures, the stories of your ancestors. How poor, how hungry so many of them must have been. How persecuted and yet dignified they were.

And think of this; when we swallow Jesus in the Holy Eucharist we swallow not only Jesus, we swallow our ancestors, the homeless, the starving.

"Come blessed of My Father receive the Kingdom prepared for you. You welcomed me."