

There were two words I hated to hear from the lips of my high school history teacher. I can still imagine his gravelly voice as he'd charge into our classroom and shatter the peace with an announcement that sent us all begging for mercy. "Pop quiz," he'd say, "Pop quiz." It only happened once a month or so, but it was a moment of terror. A pop quiz was a ten question exam that fell on us without warning. Without fail the facts I studied in that course were never the facts he wanted to know. I was always preparing for some other exam.

For a lot of us, I think the Last Judgment is something that strikes us like a pop quiz. We don't know when it's coming and we're never quite sure if the answers we're preparing will match the questions God will ask.

Matthew's Gospel serves us well in this quandary. What he's done is to give us Cliff notes, or cheat sheets for the final exam. Matthew says, "Look, here are the questions." <sup>soph-fresh: Here -</sup>

Whether you're an older or newer member of the Catholic Church, these questions will surprise. If you're an older Catholic, you probably expect the questions at the Last Judgment to be, "Did you follow the rules? Did you obey the laws?" If you're a newer Catholic, you probably expect the questions at the Last Judgment to be, "Did you join committees? Did you go to meetings?"

What a surprise it will be for all of us to hear these questions: Did you feed the hungry? Did you clothe the naked? Did you visit the sick? Did you help a human being in need, like the one sitting right now on your left, or on your right? Did you? Did you do that? Because that will determine your judgment.

It's not the needy who fear judgment. It's the prosperous. It's those who have who will be judged. Where does prosperity lead us? Does it lead us to give thanks? Or does it lead us to become aloof?

The King says that those who have shared prosperity will enter the kingdom's joy. Joy comes not from having prosperity but from sharing it. Just having it all can make us stingy, isolated, and protective. Sharing it makes us free and gives us joy.

Every student's nightmare is to go through the semester preparing for the wrong exam. But to pass this exam really doesn't take that much. We don't have to read all the books; we don't have to know all the laws; we don't have to join every committee. We just have to help a neighbor in need.