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Photo by Sr. Karin Nürnberg, CSJ, from the Abbey St. Hildegard in Eibingen, Germany

BLESSED ARE YOU

By Sr. Jeanne Fallon, CSJ

Today's Gospel

Jesus came down with the Twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.

Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.

Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep.

Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.”

LUKE 6:17, 20-26

Reflection

Just before this event, Luke tells us that Jesus had spent the night on the mountain in prayer, and in the morning, he chose his disciples, the “Twelve.” Together they came down to a stretch of level ground. Before a multitude of people from other regions, Jesus gave what has been called the “Sermon on the Plain” (in contrast to Matthew’s “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew 5-7). Gazing on his disciples, he said four sayings beginning with Blessed...

My first thought is, what is the meaning of “Blessed?” In the Hebrew Scriptures, we hear God blessing the animals, a sign of God’s delight in the life of these creatures: they can grow and multiply! God blesses humankind with happiness and well-being. In Sr. Christine Hilliard’s words, “Divine blessing is the action of God – something done to the recipient.” It is as if God is saying, “Whatever you need for wholeness is my gift to you!” Maybe that is what I do every morning when I come into my office and walk up to my blooming African violet and bless it with delight.

Returning to the passage from Luke above, *Jesus raises his eyes to the disciples and says, “Blessed are you!”* He would have been seated and his gaze would have rested on those he had chosen to carry on his message: *Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.* Jesus is speaking to the materially poor who struggle each day to survive. He is speaking to the billions of people who suffer without food and housing and home, without healthcare and jobs and dignity. Jesus affirms all who are languishing and says, *I am with you, and I will give you a place in God’s kingdom.* Jesus continues to bless and affirm those who are hungry and starving now and promises that they will be satisfied. He blesses and encourages those who are weeping, grieving and bowed down with sorrow. Jesus will lift them up and give them comfort. Jesus’ fourth blessing is for those who are hated or excluded or denounced because they walk in Jesus’ Way, for justice and peace. Anyone who stands up for the nonviolent Way of Jesus will be rewarded and honored in heaven.

As the Sermon on the Plain continues, Jesus addresses others with four woes: *But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.* Jesus follows in the line of prophets: proclaiming the Good News and denouncing those whose wealth oppresses the poor and downtrodden. Woe to you who are

filled, woe to you who laugh, woe to you when all speak well of you.... Jesus turns their world upside-down. Being rich when so many are desperate or being overly satisfied while so many are starving or being extravagantly entertained while so many are being crushed by grief under unjust practices: this is why Jesus came to show us God's reign of universal love.



Consciousness Examen and Pondering

Yesterday I was struck with deep sorrow when I saw a long line of handcuffed immigrants marching toward a military plane with only the clothes on their backs and without their family, headed for Guatemala. I cried within, "Blessed are you, blessed are you! May you be comforted and consoled by Jesus Christ in this time of great sorrow."

As you ponder the above Gospel and reflection, what is stirring in your inward being? What is your prayer?

For Prayer

Beatitudes for Modern Christians

Blessed are those who remain faithful while enduring evils inflicted on them by others and forgive them from their heart.

Blessed are those who look into the eyes of the abandoned and marginalized and show them their closeness.

Blessed are those who see God in every person and strive to make others also discover him.

Blessed are those who protect and care for our common home.

Blessed are those who renounce their own comfort in order to help others.

Blessed are those who pray and work for full communion between Christians.

All these are messengers of God's mercy and tenderness, and surely they will receive from him their merited reward.

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