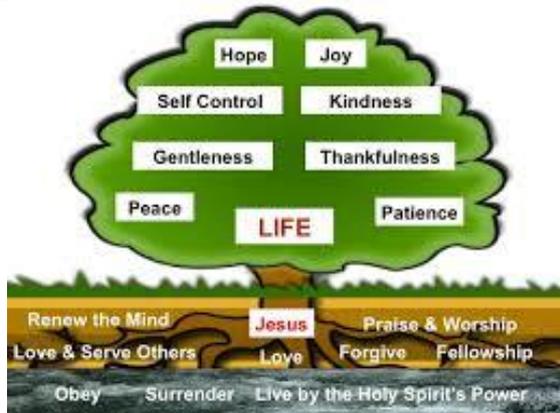


## REFLECTIONS – SIXTH SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C, 17<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2019



### GOSPEL LUKE 6:17, 20-26

*Jesus came down with the Twelve and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and from Jerusalem and from the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases.*

*Then fixing his eyes on his disciples he said: 'How happy are you who are poor, yours is the kingdom of God. Happy you who are hungry now: you shall be satisfied. Happy you who weep now: you shall laugh.*

*'Happy are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, for then your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets.*

*'But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now. Alas for you who have your fill now: you shall go hungry. Alas for you who laugh now: you shall mourn and weep. Alas for you when the world speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.'*

#### TO PONDER:

- ✚ When saying "Blessed are the poor", would Jesus be trying to say that the poor should continue to live in their poverty?
- ✚ What are the social categories of the people who are threatened by unhappiness? (Lk 6:24-26)?
- ✚ Do I look at life and at people as Jesus does?

#### REFLECTION by Peter Thomas, JPIC Team

The Carmelite Rule of St. Albert and indeed the way of life for all Christians is an appeal to its followers to shadow the life of Jesus and therefore proposes a radical living of the gospel, those uncompromising values as espoused in what we know as the Beatitudes in Luke's Gospel today.

Luke does not 'pull-any-punches' with his record of Jesus words straightforwardly refer to socio-economic realities like, poverty, hunger, grief, marginalization and exclusion. Luke is concerned that we should free ourselves from materialism by being detached from the oppression of possessions.

Luke, who allows no room for bargaining pronounces anguish on people who adopt those qualities that run counter to the Beatitudes. This recipe or 'way' is a lesson in how to live happily ever after as Jesus presents the qualities that make for a happy or blessed life. Four times Jesus pronounces blessings on people with these four qualities and four times He pronounces woes on people with the opposite qualities.

To be blessed is to have inner joy because in following Jesus we have an uncluttered heart and open mind. To have woe is to have sorrow and pain brought about by our deviation from Jesus way, a path that is expressed concretely through authentic aspirations for justice and freedom or as might be uttered in traditional religious language, to live continually in the presence of God.

Although Luke's version, unlike the Sermon on the Mount as found in Matthew (Ch.5: 1-11) is primarily addressed to His disciples there is obviously an appeal to outsiders, such as ourselves. These teachings seem to be aimed at encouraging and strengthening us as we face inevitable obstacles to living the counter-cultural life of Christian charity and justice.

But it also shows us we need to repent because of the huge gap that often occurs between our behavior and Jesus teaching especially that of hypocrisy which is a violent cancer that tears at the very heart of Christian living and leaves it wasted.

In 'The Minefield' a recent program on ABC Radio National, Scott Stevens and Waleed Aly discussed the ethical issue of what are the obligations of the globally wealthy towards those living in poverty. Acknowledging a sense of exhaustion in discussing this issue they did however come to the conclusion that there is something morally reprehensible about any attempt to escape from this sense of obligation.

Their conclusion does not provide us with an easy answer to big questions such as re-distribution of global wealth but it does challenge us to look more closely at today's gospel and to keep seeking remedies.

Today's gospel is about 'bread and blessing'. On the one hand we know the practical obligations it implies and on the other it confronts us to understand the plight of poverty expressed in words like shame, hopelessness and isolation; conditions that the gospel can directly address.

As income disparities rise world-wide it is becoming harder to maintain love and harmony between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots.' There is often a paternalistic arrogance among those who have and a resentful envy among those who don't. Luke's gospel presents us with the privilege of helping to heal that breach. It is done both through practical aid and justice, 'bread' and through bringing people into the presence of God, 'blessing'. They are not mutually exclusive.

**The Beatitudes is a message of love and hope that our culture desperately needs.**



*I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.*  
**Elie Wiesel**



## INTERCESSIONS

- for the needs of the world and for the grace to examine our own lives, we pray: **Gracious God, hear us.**
- For all the world's poor; and for those whose comfortable living standards ignore the needs of the poor or contribute to their suffering, we pray: **Gracious God, hear us.**
- For those who are hungry, who never have enough food for minimal sustenance; and for those who over consume or whose habits diminish the world's resources and environment, we pray: **Gracious God, hear us.**
- for an end to all discrimination, but especially discrimination against women and girls who are estimated to make up 80% of trafficked victims, so that all may live with dignity and respect, we pray: **Gracious God, hear us.**

## CARMELITE TRADITION:

*"if we want to be sincere with Christ, we must resist and fight, with all means at our disposal, the systematic injustice which is part of our society and which lies heavily on the shoulders of so many of the men and women of our time."*  
General Congregation at Rio de Janeiro 1980

The preferential option for the poor and promotion of justice and peace act as a sort of leaven of renewal for all Carmelites whose principal aim is to follow Christ, and at the same time transform and enrich the world.

The Prophetic Dimension of the Carmelite Charism, Fransiscus Kosashi (p193)