

REMEMBERING the POOR, The LONELY and the DOWNTRODDEN

Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.
Deliver them: rid them from the hand of oppression.
Psalm 82

The poor of this world come with a variety of needs.
Let us remember in prayer the poor, the sick, the dying, the grieving,
the unemployed, the homeless, the outcasts of society,
those prejudiced against because of gender, creed, nationality or life
style, the unjustly imprisoned, and those who live outside the norms of
what we think is "normal society".



We pause and in silence remember that we are all daughters and sons of
a Loving and Merciful God Who is always with His people for all of us
have been made in God's image and likeness.
Glory to the God of all peoples.
Glory to God for loving us with an everlasting love.
Glory to God Who is always an everywhere present to us.

HYMN: BLEST ARE THEY

Rejoice and be glad! Blessed are you, holy are you!
Rejoice and be glad! Yours is the kingdom of God!

Blest are they, the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of God.
Blest are they, full of sorrow, they shall be consoled.
Blest are they, the lonely ones, they shall inherit the earth.
Blest are they who hunger and thirst, they shall have their fill.
Blest are they who show mercy, mercy shall be theirs.
Blest are they who are pure of heart, they shall see God.
Blest are they who seek peace, they are the children of God.
Blest are they who suffer in faith, the glory of God is theirs.
Blest are you who suffer hate, all because of Me.
Rejoice and be glad, yours is the kingdom: shine for all to see.
David Haas, ©1985, GIA Publications



PRAYER BEFORE THE SCRIPTURE READINGS

People of God, prepare your hearts and minds to receive the Holy Word of God come to us today. May it enlighten our minds, strengthen our souls and call us to action.

SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 58: 6–11

This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke;

Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and He will say: Here I am! If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech;

If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday;

Then the Lord will guide you always and give you plenty. He will renew your strength, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails.

The Word of the Lord!

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 10: 30–37

Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead.

A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.

Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.

But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him.

The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.'

Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?"

He man answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

The Gospel of the Lord!

REFLECTION: ON WHICH SIDE OF THE BEATITUDES DO WE STAND?

Rev Robert Bowman

LUKE 6: 10–31

And raising His eyes toward His disciples Jesus 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.

But 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.

"But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic.

Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back.

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

If we rearrange Luke's version of the Beatitudes a little, putting each "Woe to You" immediately after its Beatitude, the message becomes clear.

"Blest are you poor; the reign of God is yours. But woe to you rich, for your consolation is now."

"Blest are you who hunger; filled you shall be. But woe to you who are full; you shall go hungry."

"Blest are you who are weeping; you shall laugh. But woe to you who laugh now; you shall weep in your grief."

"Blest shall you be when men hate you, when they ostracize you and insult you ... rejoice and exult, for your reward shall be great in heaven. Thus it was that their fathers treated the prophets. But woe to you when all speak well of you. Their fathers treated the false prophets in just this way."

"God's preferential option for the poor." says that God is on the side of the poor and downtrodden, and woe to those who make them that way or keep them that way.

This goes beyond telling the poor, "Don't worry about it; God will make it up to you in the next life." Instead, it seems to say, "God doesn't like it that people are poor, and he's not only going to make it up to them, he's going to punish those responsible if they don't change their ways."

If the poor and downtrodden reading the gospel and say, "Yes, God loves us. But He hates the fact that we're poor and powerless. He's so ticked off by it that He's going to send people to hell for it. Maybe we shouldn't stay poor and powerless. If God doesn't like us to be poor and

downtrodden, then He didn't intend for us to be this way. Those who have been telling us that we are poor because God planned it that way have been lying to us. God doesn't want us to be poor. He wants us to do something about it!"

"If God doesn't want these people to be poor, then it's our job to stand with them against the rich and powerful. It's our job to teach them that the gospel proclaims their right to a fair share of God's creation. And it's our job to help them get it."

I see this as one of the most hopeful things that has happened to the church in seventeen hundred years. When the church was in its infancy, it was a church of the poor and downtrodden. The Galileans who listened to Jesus preach the Beatitudes in the hills by the Sea of Galilee were the dregs of society. The rich Jews were in Jerusalem. Nearly all the apostles were martyred. So were the early popes.

Then along came Constantine, and the church became respectable, upper class, even wealthy. Saints started coming from the ranks of warriors, princes, and kings.

But now it is changing again. Once again we have saints and martyrs who were killed by the rich and powerful for standing with the poor and downtrodden instead of the other way around.

Thank God that is changing. And when we read this gospel of Luke: "Blest are you poor; the reign of God is yours. But woe to you rich, for your consolation is now," we won't be embarrassed to be asked, "Which side are you on?"

As Christians, we hope in the resurrection, and look forward eagerly to the life to come. But we must accept that God has work for us to do right here and now, in this life. The Beatitudes comfort us, and at least one of the promised blessings applies to us. But we are also challenged, and we forget at our peril God's preferential option for the poor. Let us always know on whose side we stand. God has made His choice. We can only stand with Him if we stand with those He has chosen. May we always choose to stand with God.

PRAYERS of INTERCESSION

RESPONSE: GOD OF COMPASSION FILL US WITH YOUR LOVE

That each of us will be "beatitudinal" people, striving to make the Kingdom of God be right here and right now, we pray:

That we will work ceaselessly for justice for all people, we pray:

That all who suffer and feel poor, lonely, rejected or downtrodden will experience the love and healing presence of God through us, we pray:

That our eyes will be opened to those around us who quietly suffer, and that we will be unafraid to tackle the social, political, economic and moral problems that keep people oppressed, we pray:

That the Holy Spirit will fill our hearts with love and compassion and cause us to be champions of the poor and downtrodden, we pray:

O Lord, this is our prayer, this is our hope, this is our dream. Amen.

EXCERPTS from NO GREATER LOVE

ON GIVING

I will tell you a story. One night a man came to our house and told me, "There is a family with eight children. They have not eaten for days." I took some food with me and went. When I came to that family, I saw the faces of those little children disfigured by hunger. There was no sorrow or sadness in their faces, just the deep pain of hunger. I gave rice to the mother. She divided the rice in two, and went out, carrying half the rice. When she came back, I asked her, "Where did you go?" She gave me this simple answer, "To my neighbors; they are hungry also!" I was not surprised that she gave—poor people are really very generous. I was surprised that she knew they were hungry. As a rule, when we are suffering, we are so focused on ourselves, we have no time for others.

ON POVERTY & THE POOR

In every country there are poor. On certain continents poverty is more spiritual than material, a poverty that consists of loneliness, discouragement, and the lack of meaning in life. I have also seen in Europe and America very poor people sleeping on newspapers or rags in the streets. There are those kind of poor in London, Madrid, and Rome. It is too easy simply to talk or concern ourselves with the poor who are far away. It is much harder and, perhaps, more challenging to turn our attention and concern toward the poor who live right next door to us. When I pick up a hungry person from the streets, I give him rice and bread, and I have satisfied that hunger. But a person who is shut out, feels unwanted by society, unloved and terrified—how much more difficult is it to remove that hunger?

You in the West have the spiritually poorest of the poor much more than you have the physically poor. Often among the rich are very spiritually poor people. I find it is easy to give a plate of rice to a hungry person, to furnish a bed to a person who has no bed, but to console or to remove the bitterness, anger, and loneliness that comes from being spiritually deprived, that takes a long time.

From NO GREATER LOVE by Mother Teresa, © 1997, New World Library

HYMN: ONLY IN GOD

Only in God will my soul be at rest.
From Him comes my hope and salvation.
He alone is my Rock of Safety, my Strength, my Glory, my God.
Trust in Him at all times, O people, and pour out your hearts.
God Himself is a Refuge for us and a Stronghold for our fear.
Many times have I heard of His long-lasting love.
You, Yourself, Lord, reward all who labor for love of Your name.
John Foley, SJ (1976) New Dawn Music

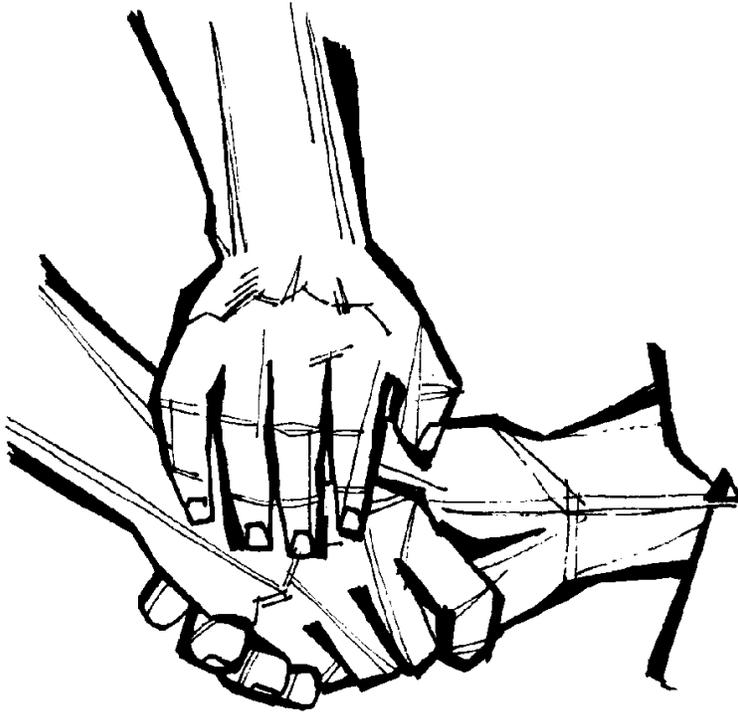
PRAYER: 1 John 4

Love one another for love is of God. Love one another for God is love.
Since God has given His love to us, therefore let us love one another.
If we love one another, God will love us and live in us.
Let not your hearts be troubled for love has no room for fear.
In love, all fear is forgotten, for God is here with us.
God is love and they who abide in love,
abide in God, and God in them.



Saint John Baptist de La Salle,
and all you holy Brothers who have gone before us,
help us to see the face of Jesus in each person we meet.

Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever!



LET US BE FOR ONE ANOTHER AS CHRIST IS FOR US!