

THE 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF THE YEAR "C".

February 14, 2010

(Jeremiah 17: 5-8; 1 Corinthians 15: 12, 16-20; Luke 6: 17, 20-26)

### THE MESSAGE OF THE BEATITUDES: A CHALLENGE

Today's Gospel presents St. Luke's own version of the Beatitudes. Contrary to the one found in the Gospel of **Matthew**, which was addressed to the Jewish Christians, Luke's audience was primarily the Gentile Converts to Christianity.

In his own account of the Sermon, Luke declares a blessing on those who are **poor, hungry, weeping** and **hated**. As if to worsen the situation, he goes on and explicitly pronounces a **woe** on those who are **rich, well fed, laughing** and **well spoken of**. How can anyone call this Good News from a loving God? Is prosperity a curse or a blessing? Does it mean that the rich who keep God's commandments will be damned, and the poor who glory in evil deeds will be assured of the eternal blessedness? Certainly not! How then are we to understand Luke's Beatitudes?

The key to Luke's Beatitudes is to be found in the knowledge of the social background of his Gospel, and in an important clause which he adds at the end of the last beatitude: "on account of the Son of Man."

Luke wrote his Gospel at a time of terrible **social** and **religious** persecution of believers in Christ. It was so severe that anyone professing to be a Christian knew for sure that he or she would be disowned by family, rejected by friends and excluded from the synagogue. One immediately lost one's right of inheritance, free association and commerce in the community. In short, saying **"yes"** to following Jesus instantly makes one a member of the club of the poor, the hated, the reviled, the excluded.

Brothers and sisters, with that in mind, we can now understand the message of the Beatitudes. Here Luke is saying that those who accept these hard conditions and misfortunes, as the **price** that they have to pay for **trusting** and **faithfully** following Christ, are the blessed ones. What about you and me?

In our society today, are we not having lots of **moral issues** challenging our Christian faith and our trust in God? As followers of Christ, how are going about professing and defending our faith? How much difficulties have you and I, willingly encountered for the sake of Christ? Many of us will choose to keep silent when we ought to speak out. This is simply because we do not want to

offend anyone. Let us be aware that whoever keeps silent in a matter of injustice has taken side with the oppressor.

Why can't we be ready to die for the one who, first, died for us? We probably want Christ without the cross. We may not want to say the truth because someone may be hurt. How can I pray the "Angelus" in my office? No, a non-catholic passing by may see me and get offended. What a betrayal is that? Remember, Jesus did not try to please his contemporaries, but rather to please his Father. "My meat is to do the will of the one who sent me." What about us?

He spoke out vehemently against the irreligiosity of the Pharisees and the injustices of his own time. That was why they hated him. Today, how do we handle such similar issues in our society, our community and even in our church? It is always: "Let the sleeping dogs lie." I don't want trouble. My fellow Christians, where is our faith? No wonder Late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen once said that; "We are God's chosen people, but sometimes we behave like God's frozen people..." Jesus suffered for us, how can we repay him? Betrayal, unfaithfulness or what? Let us reflect on our faithfulness to God for the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity.

**GOD IS GOOD! ALL THE TIME!**