

SOME REFLECTIONS FOR THE WEEK

August 4, 2019

“BLESSED ARE THE POOR?” – The Lord’s perspective on poverty is mixed. On the one hand, Jesus acts to relieve people who are suffering from poverty of health (eg. cures) and the means to survive (eg. feedings) and the tells us that we will be judged on how we responded to Him when He met us in those who were in need (Matthew 25:31-46). And so we in the Church have perennially worked to alleviate poverty and its horrible effects through institutions of education, social services, medical care and ministries providing basic necessities such as food and shelter, places for pilgrims and migrants to gather and support one another. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) applies here.

“BLESSED ARE THE POOR” - On the other hand, Jesus teaches us that the poor are blessed (Luke 6:20) and that it is harder for a rich person to enter into heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. Further, the Lord tells the rich young man that if he would be perfect to go and sell all that he has and then come and follow Him (Matthew 19:21-30).

A KEY DISTINCTION - One clarifying insight is that there is a big difference between poverty that is imposed and crushing versus poverty that is chosen and liberating. An interesting spiritual exercise can be as ask how we see ourselves: As rich? As poor? As blessed? As cursed? As confused?

SOME RANDOM QUOTES - Here are some un-integrated quotes regarding this topic that have gotten my attention over the years:

- 1) “If you have come to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together” (Lila Watson, an Aboriginal Australian).
- 2) “The poor are objects until we are poor too.” (Constance Fitzgerald, OCD).
- 3) “Until we claim our poverty, our poverty will claim us in ways that are unconscious, negative, and destructive” (Richard Rohr, OFM).
- 4) “It is only for your love alone that the poor will forgive you for giving them bread” (St. Vincent de Paul).

LITURGICAL LIGHTS – This Tuesday (Aug. 6) we will celebrated the Feast of the **Transfiguration of the Lord**, and this week we will remembering and celebrating the examples of women and men who allowed themselves to be so transfigured by grace that God’s transfiguring Light shone out through them in their time on earth and continues to shine for us and for our world:

SAINT DOMINIC – This Thursday (Aug. 8) we will commemorate **St. Dominic de Guzman** (d. 1221). Struck by clerical corruption and by the pastoral neglect of ordinary people, Dominic was transfigured, put in motion by grace. He adopted a simple lifestyle, even to the extent of walking barefoot from place to place as he and his companions preached and taught. Hundreds of year later, his graced

transfiguration continues in the Order of Preachers (nicknamed the Dominicans or Blackfriars).

SAINT EDITH STEIN, O.C.D. – This Friday (Aug. 9) will be the memorial of St. Edith Stein who was killed in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp on this date in 1942. Nine years before her execution, when she entered the Carmelite monastery, she took the name Sister Teresa Benedicta a Cruce, that is, **Teresa Blessed BY the Cross**. Unfortunately, her Latin name is usually mistranslated as “of the Cross”, but this translation misses the depth of her experience. She saw the Cross in her life as a blessing rather than as a curse—as something to be embraced instead of shunned. Have we ever had a similar experience? “Life is difficult” is the opening sentence of *The Road Less Traveled* by M. Scott Peck. Carl Jung wrote that the root cause for all neuroses is the avoidance of legitimate suffering. Our Tradition puts it, “See how the Cross of the Lord stands revealed as the Tree of Life.” Each of us can ask, “What Cross is the Lord—in His love for me--offering me today and how shall I respond?”

BLESSED FRANZ JAEGERSTADDER – Also this Friday (Aug. 9) we will celebrate the memorial of a husband and father of three young daughters who was beheaded by the Nazis on this date in 1943 for his refusal to participate a war he judged to be evil. Before Franz was a conscientious objector he was a conscientious **profess-er**. He was not so much objecting as he was professing his faith in Christ---which put him at odds with the evils of the State. If you read the book *In Solitary Witness*---which is in our Parish Library---you can learn more about this martyr whom Pope Benedict XVI declared “Blessed” in 2007.

ST. LAWRENCE – This Saturday (Aug. 10) we'll celebrate the Feast of **St. Lawrence** who was the archdeacon of the Church of Rome and is venerated as one of the four major patron saints of that city (along with Peter, Paul and Agnes). One day in the year 231 A.D. the emperor Alexander Severus commanded Lawrence to surrender the Church's treasures. Lawrence showed up the next day with folks who were poor, homeless, orphaned, widowed, mentally impaired stating: "I present to you the treasures of the Church of Rome." Shortly thereafter, Lawrence was burned alive.

ST. CLARE OF ASSISI – Although next Sunday we will celebrate the Solemnity of the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, we will also remember that August 11 is the annual Memorial of **St. Clare of Assisi**, who struggled for forty years to obtain the "privilege of poverty" for herself and her sisters, in 1253---two days after having received papal permission for this centerpiece of her way of life---Clare died.