



**TRUTH BE TOLD**, most of us, maybe none of us, knows what it is really like to be hungry, to be so thirsty we're not sure our bodies will physically endure or survive. We, most of us at least, are fortunate in that, even in days when financial circumstances seem, or are, bleaker than bleak, we scrounge up enough food to get by, for ourselves and our families. We live where drinkable, life-sustaining water is in abundance. So much so that we often take it for granted.

Most of us, maybe none of us, have never been so hungry or thirsty that we commit most of our waking hours to satisfying that hunger, figuring out where we'll find our next meal, where our family will shelter for the night, how we'll get by. Simply understanding this beatitude is challenging, even before we begin to comprehend what it means to honor it.

Jesus uses these physical urges of hunger and thirst because they are innate, natural; they are needs and desires with which we can readily resonate, even when we are not threatened in the least by the danger of missing a meal. He uses relatable human yearnings to convey the intense need, desire – hunger, thirst – for other essential elements of human existence – righteousness, justice, dignity.

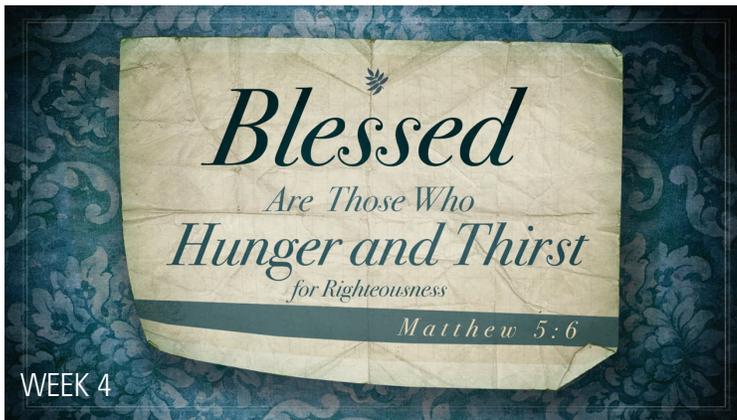
There's a distinction, however, in that this hunger or thirsting is not limited to those enduring injustice or

indignity. Even those who have a pretty smooth ride in terms of righteousness and justice, and most of us would be among them, need to realize a hunger for justice, for leveling inequities, for

of a few would not, could not, be addressed until it was the hunger of the many, especially those who are not marginalized, persecuted or rejected. They, we, could only properly address the true hunger for righteousness unless they, we, were compelled by a social, spiritual hunger.

"I offer you this by way of example," Romero once said, in trying to explain this need for a shared hunger. "A building is on fire and you're watching it burn, standing and wondering if everyone is safe. Then someone tells you that your mother and your sister are inside that building. Your attitude changes completely. You're frantic; your mother and sister are burning and you'd do anything to rescue them even at the cost of getting charred. That's what it means to be truly committed. If we look at poverty from the outside, as if we're looking at a fire, that's not to opt for the poor, no matter how concerned we may be. We should get inside as if our own mother and sister were burning. Indeed it's Christ who is there, hungry and suffering."

It's only if we share a hunger for justice, Romero seems clearly to suggest, that such a hunger can ever be satisfied; and with that hunger satisfied, all might one day rejoice. **TL**



making things right.

St. Oscar Romero, the martyred archbishop of El Salvador, was someone who came to realize this hunger. His was a comfortable existence. Like most bishops, and pastors for that matter, he had no worries of food or lodging or transportation; the trappings of his life protected him from the varied hungers that plagued his people. Romero, however, resisted the coddling enjoyed by people in power; he broke through the shell that protected him from realizing the intense hungers of his people. The oppression endured by too many of his country's people became his oppression. Their constant, all-consuming hunger for safety, for dignity, for justice became his desire. Romero would not be "satisfied" as long as that life-threatening hunger for justice and dignity remained.

That's the hunger Romero wanted every Christian to realize – the hunger of the marginalized, the persecuted, the rejected – because the hunger