

Saturday gospel: Luke 6:17-23

“At that time, Jesus stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people ... and he said ...”

“Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh”

On Saturday morning an older lady from Sri Lanka, who lives up the street, was sitting at a table, eating alone. She does not speak English well enough, but she was able to confess that she felt “so-so” that day. And she tried to smile, holding back her tears. The confession continued. She was sad because of her daughter and her new family. They excluded her. And she felt the family overall does not treat her daughter well. Her pain was real and deep.

She started to cry as her confession went on. She has nobody here, she is completely alone, speaking a broken English, living in a subsidised building in a fancy neighbourhood. What can be worse than that?

“But you know, I dreamt one night”, she said with a smile, “I dreamt about ...” (and she points at the scene on the wall with Jesus feeding the hungry) “... that He took me with Him and He gave me food with everybody else. And one day, I was waiting outside in line for food. And somebody told me that I could come inside. They chose me. And I came and then I ate here inside. With everybody else. Here people are good. Not so sad anymore.” And she tries to smile for a little while. But then again, she eats, and she cries, and she eats, and she smiles.

“Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.”

She comes out of the chapel. She was just driving in the neighborhood, as an Uber driver, and she stopped to pray. She is a single mother of teenagers. She just had to move in a basement apartment, not being able to afford a higher rent for a more decent one. She works day and night, but it is not enough to pay rent. Car expenses are high (she rents the car), not to mention food, clothes and other things. She cries as she speaks about her situation and her teenage children. “But at the end, I told God ... when I prayed in the chapel ... I don’t know what else to do. And I said, I offer my children to Him, to take care of them and He does ... I know He does it.”

She smiles as she leaves hoping to return more often.

“Bless those who persecute you”

Most of the time, when C. comes to pray with us in the chapel, he approaches the one who is closer to him and says: “I come to pray because they have killed my mom and my dad.”

C. repeats those words over and over again. He is in his 70’s, even though he looks older. Whatever tragedy happened in his life, it must have been many years ago. However, that left deep scars in him that only prayer can reach.

One morning when C. ended up in the chapel, while a couple of people were praying in silence, not being able to approach anybody he stayed and he prayed. At times one could hear his words: “Thank you God.



Bless them God. Thank you, God.” Every 5 minutes he would bless and thank God. At the end, on his way out, he would not forget to remind us: “I come to pray because they killed my mom and dad .”

How can poverty bring anything good to the human condition? It is a sign of injustice and lack of mercy among brethren. It humiliates the soul and decreases the dignity of the human person. It excludes the person from communion because it always keeps the poor person outside of the camp. How can hunger, that empties the soul of hope, bring any good news to an empty stomach? Since the prayer of the soul does not foresee any imminent mercy in the other one. On the contrary. The prayer only makes neglect more evident and heavier to bear. It makes the heart more conscious of its own alienation. What about the mourning? How is that good, since the tears are ridiculed, and the countenance mocked? In a perfect world it makes you look dishonest because there is none to cry with you and none to listen to your cry. Because the one that you mourn is without reputation. He has become the one without value. It makes you a betrayer of a “just” cause that is going to save a nation.

“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High”

But it is not the poverty, mourning or hunger that are good but rather the people. Those who are now poor, hungry and those who are mourning and persecuted. Because they have become the “bene dicere”. They practice “eulogia”. They “speak good” about God. To Him directly and to all those who have the ears to hear. They witness that the “Word is True”. They bless Him with their heart.

Christ speaks truly and so He speaks to those who listen to Him and do the Word and so they become the good word. So when he tells the poor they are blessed, they are. They become the “bene dicere” for the whole community. The only good words within the avalanche of lies. When they are present there is hope because there is something to be said, and there is something to listen to. Somebody to encounter who speaks good about Christ. Somebody who opens up to life with a sincere heart, that knows pain and knows hope.

They are the opposite of the Pharisees, who look well on the outside and praise with their lips while having a heart full of vanities. The poor look repugnant and illiterate and yet full of Wisdom and of the Holy Spirit. Because they speak good about God. They bless Him.

The gospel today, as we reflected on Friday, reveals that God is merciful. He is good for all with no partiality. The good news does not stop here. It reveals that the goodness of the Father is not witnessed only by the Son. But also by the poor. Because they are blessed by Christ. They become the “bene dicere”. They become the good word.

There is a real transformation in the community, and we see that first in the life of the poor. And none can escape it. Not even the enemies. Because they expect nothing in return since they have lost everything already. But it is the path through which man finds out that he can say good words about the Father. Then he is becoming the “bene dicere” himself.

“Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die..... In all this did not Job sin with his lips”. (Job2:9-10)



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under
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