

6th Sunday OT – Luke 6:17, 20-26

"Blessed are you...woe to you!"

In *Catholic Women Preach*, Sr. Bridget Bearss, religious of the Sacred Heart, writes,

"After my mother died, my father was lost. He had planned to go first. A diabetic, every night at 10 pm he and my mother shared a snack that helped regulate his blood sugar through the night. Every night at 10 pm, they broke bread—literally: they ate toast.

"I was with my father a couple of weeks after my mother died, and one night at 10 pm I said to him,

"I'll go and make us some toast."

He shook his head with definitive clarity, "No. No toast."

Presuming this was to protect his open heart of grief, I said, "Because you ate toast with Mom every night?"

"No," he said, "Because I hate toast."

I was baffled and sat back down. "Wait. For sixty-six years, every night you ate toast and you don't like toast?"

"That's right," he replied.

"Why didn't you ever say something?" I asked.

"Because your mother loved toast. That's why I ate toast."

Sister Bridget continues, "That is what it means, for me, to dwell in the heart of God... *To be so willing to step outside the ego, the self, that we are drawn into the heart of another.* We are drawn into the heart of God. Sometimes we are the one who makes the toast for another and sometimes we are the one who eats it because that's what love calls us to do. It is never one or the other—it is always both/and.

Then she compared this to our divided world, but more important, she states that we are ***the instruments of the heart of God*** who choose to build bridges of relationship in places, structures, attitudes, and experiences of

difference. We do not remain in the polarity but live from the unity of knowing that we, each one of us, have the possibility to be **a prophet** or **a persecutor**.

In Luke's gospel we have both **blessings and curses**. Luke pictures Jesus as the New Moses, who has spoken with God in prayer on a mountain and now descends to proclaim God's ways to all who are ready to listen in the traditional language of blessing and curse to describe the kingdom of God.

But why these curses or woes? The rest of the gospel helps us understand. We read of the avarice of *the rich fool* who wanted to build "himself" bigger barns, or of the cruelty of *the billionaire* who ignored *Lazarus* at his gate. On the other hand, we admire the almsgiving of *Zacchaeus* who gave half his wealth to the poor, and in the Acts of the Apostles, the generous hospitality of *the wealthy Lydia* in Philippi.

God's Kingdom transforms the values of this world into his own values, where we become *instruments of the heart of God*, even to the point where we eat the toast we hate out of love, a simple act we do for the ones we love. The above examples present to us what the person **who lives or do not live** the beatitudes, **will become** or not become those who are cursed.

We have examples around us today of saints who were changed slowly and rarely overnight. Mother Teresa, who decided to leave her comfortable convent in India, went out into the streets of Calcutta, where eventually her former students followed her. Dorothy Day who left behind her past life to become a saint for the poor and the street people, even though some in the Church claim because of her past she shouldn't be claimed a saint. She had a daughter out of wedlock. I guess they claim the same for Merton.

These little acts of love, like eating toast with your wife because you love her, become virtues, that is, simple acts of love **repeated** over time become habits of the heart, which we call virtues. Just as little acts of meanness or laziness become vices. It is those little acts that will change us into a blessing or a curse, into a Zacchaeus and a Lydia, or into a cruel billionaire follower of the KKK or Nazi Party.

Who we associate will also affect our lives. That is why a loving faith community will change us over the years for the good, especially a faith community that continually reaches out beyond itself to real world like Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa where all are welcome into their lives.