

6th Sunday Ordinary time "C" 2010

I. What a gospel for Valentine's day! Woe to you who laugh now! Woe when all speak well of you! Blessed are you who are poor, hungry, weeping, hated, excluded and insulted. The Old Testament message was if you do good things, you will receive blessings and rewards. Jesus seems to have reversed this.

II. There have been many opinions by bible scholars on this reversal of the Old Testament wisdom. The simplest is probably the best. A person has to be open and empty to let God and other people in. If you want to love and be loved you need space at the center of who you are. Rich people who "have everything" always face the temptation to let their possessions define who they are. "Attack my property and you attack me"...and lest we think we are not rich, it's estimated that the average American who goes to a restaurant eats enough for five people. Father Tom Hagan, who is an Oblate of St. Francis and used to say Sunday Mass here at one time, has been in Haiti for the last twenty years. He wrote an open letter to a Catholic Newspaper two weeks ago. "Every day when I go to the Cite Soleil neighborhood in the city, I see who amazing resiliency the people have. Maybe, it's because they have few material possessions and apparently happiness does not depend on their possession. I told them recently in a sermon they have enormous worth in the eyes of God. The people stood up and began to cheer. I asked my altar server why they were clapping (my Creole is not good) and he responded. "Father no one ever tells them that they have worth".

III. The principle running through St. Luke's version of the Beatitudes is this: You are blessed if you don't cram yourself full. Full of food, drink, pride, visits to the shore, stunning hair do's, shining teeth, and of course, reputation, reputation, reputation. Instead blessed are you if you stay empty, if you become a spacious home for God and other human beings. We are built to be quiet receivers, people who know we are empty and yet patient. There is only One who can give us the Bread we hunger for, who can satisfy our deepest need for love. Blessed are you if you let go into His Arms.