

Speaking of God

Honest Christianity for a World Seeking Hope

The Poor are Calling Us

Anyone who has ever read a newspaper or listened to a network news broadcast knows about the poor. We know about disease, illiteracy, and human misery. We're very aware of the socially rejected, the ones we keep at the margins of our society. And we see images daily of people suffering the ravages of war, of losing their homes, of weeping in the streets over the loss of their loved ones.

It's heartbreaking, isn't it? And yet, with all the media and information and internet connections constantly around us every day, it's possible to become immune to this pain, to ignore the depths of it, even to simply *not think about it* anymore. It's possible, in a word, for us to become thoughtless, our minds filled with more pleasant ideas brought to us by advertisers and network sitcoms.

But for a person of prayer, such ignorance and thoughtlessness are impossible. Whenever there is silence around us in



prayer, whenever we are open to the loved ones of God, this parade of injustice marches across the screens of our minds. Prayer leads, inevitably, to the poor. It leads us to want what God wants. Do you recall the opening words of Jesus' ministry in Luke? "...to bring good news to the poor...to proclaim release to the captives...to let the oppressed go free."



This makes prayer rather dangerous for anyone seeking a life of wealth and comfort. For how can we who live in Christ be comfortable alone? How can we who

pray settle for a lifestyle of relative wealth until every man, every woman, and every child shares it with us?

There is a line in the Gospel of Luke which haunts everyone who prays. It sums up the clear mandate of the Christian to prefer the poor and the little ones, the ones who lack justice, the ones who live

without peace and comfort. When you pray, this one line of the text is enough to disturb you forever: "Woe to you who are rich," the text says. "Woe to you..." (6:24). What does this mean? For the one who prays, it is a disturbing reminder that prayer must always lead to the poor. If our prayer is honest and we are truly open to the flow of God's grace running like a river through our lives, then we are reminded here that work for justice and peace is where this river leads us.

So in prayer today, commit yourself to take one small step at least, to live with a little less comfort yourself, to become active in supporting the care of the suffering, to keeping before your mind the ones who are caught in the struggles of life.