

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C 2007 – Luke 14:25-33

- 1) We have begun to see her everywhere now
 - a) In statues and icons;
 - i) helping people,
 - ii) caring for the poor.
 - iii) clothed in her simple blue and white sari,
 - b) She is Mother Theresa of Calcutta.
- 2) Familiar except for now increasingly her head in those images sports a golden halo.
- 3) Of course we know that that halo is just an artistic convention,
- 4) And that Mother Theresa's real holiness is found,
 - a) not in the what shines around her head but what shone through her life
 - i) Her care for the poor
 - ii) Her work on behalf of families
 - iii) Her faith in God,
 - b) All of which propelled her into projects that no one thought would succeed.
 - c) All of which caused us to see her as
 - i) more than a woman,
 - ii) more than a nun;
 - iii) but as a saint
 - (1) Someone whose life offers us a glimpse of the person God wants us to be.
- 5) However this past week we have been given a glimpse of the woman
 - a) upon whom we have hung that halo,
 - b) For on the 10th anniversary of her death,
 - i) the book *Come Be My Light*
 - (1) containing excerpts from her diaries and personal letters has been published
 - c) It reveals a woman who is not some plaster saint
 - d) But flesh and blood
 - i) Drowning in spiritual darkness and doubt.
- 6) For some this was a welcome revelation
 - i) For they could never believe that Mother Theresa,
 - ii) was as perfect as people said she was.
 - (1) And to be able to see her humanity clearly
 - (2) Actually makes her more believable, not less.
- 7) However for others, this was an unwelcome shock
 - a) Because for them SAINT Theresa of Calcutta,
 - i) clothed in a sari and a halo,
 - b) Had become for them an image of God's presence in this world
 - i) An image that has been broken
 - ii) Because her perfect sanctity has been challenged by her own words.
 - c) And thus if this woman is a saint, then
 - d) not only our image of Mother Teresa is threatened;
 - e) but also sainthood itself.
- 8) And yet if that is only now happening to us

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- a) After everything we have seen in the Church,
 - b) Especially in the past few years,
 - c) Well then we must not have been paying much attention to Jesus
- 9) The image we have of Jesus is very much like that we have of Mother Teresa
- i) A person,
 - (1) Wrapped in robes and crowned with a halo,
 - (2) whose life reveals the best and highest values
 - (a) of the family, the community the world
 - (3) in short reveals God,
 - (a) and the way God wants us all to be.
- 10) And yet, the question begs to be asked; if he was so good,
- (a) Why did so many people hate him?
 - (2) Maybe because he said
 - (i) his followers hate their families
 - 1. Rather than support their traditional values
 - (ii) His followers renounce their possessions
 - 1. Rather than rely on the family resources for their security.
 - (iii) His followers are not “pro-life”
 - a. At least when it comes to their own,
 - 2. But are willing to hate their lives by carrying crosses,
 - a. Symbol of that death so disgraceful that the Romans who dreamt it up reserved it for their greatest criminals.
 - (iv) His followers do not act on blind faith,
 - 1. But cannily weigh the possibilities and recognize their resources before they commit to a plan of action.
 - (b) IN short people who follow Jesus might be his disciples
 - (i) But they were no saints.
- b) And yet if Jesus sets himself against
- i) Many of the things such as family, that we think are holy
- 11) It is not because he wishes to destroy them
- a) But because he wishes to redefine them
- 12) Not because he wishes to discredit sainthood,
- a) But because he wishes to relocate it.
- 13) Jesus doesn't hate families, doesn't hate life;
- i) But in Jesus' day,
 - (1) families were your health insurance, your life insurance, your pension, your police force,
 - (a) they were what formed you to be a good, holy member of Gods people
 - (2) They were what you trusted, often blindly, for your security.
 - (3) They were what you owed your life to in return.
- 14) Thus if people were ever to hear his invitation to become part of his new family,
- a) A family redefined where since there is only one father,
 - i) all are mothers and sisters and brothers of his;
 - b) A family where all are challenged to be holy

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- i) by challenging the presumptions of those who think they know what holiness is,
- c) Then he had to challenge the traditional family values of his day,
 - i) so that we might begin to see in the people whom those values rejected
 - (1) the spark of holiness
 - (2) The sign of God's presence
 - (3) God's invitation to follow them as they follow Jesus
 - (4) Knowing just what it will cost.
- 15) Mother Theresa was one of these people,
 - a) But there is another woman, near and dear to Nativity who was one too;
- 16) For Dorothy Day was a woman who challenged the standards of polite Catholic society in her day,
 - a) by redefining holiness as service of the poor
 - b) and relocating sainthood in the lives of those she served.
- 17) She too has been proposed for sainthood,
 - a) and images of her sporting a halo have long been in circulation;
 - b) indeed we have one in the rectory chapel.
- 18) I am told, however, that some people, including members of her own family,
 - a) oppose any formal cause for canonization,
 - b) such as the one which is moving quickly for Mother Theresa.
- 19) I don't know why.
 - a) Maybe they realize that a formal cause would begin to reshape her life's story into something more in accord with accepted standards of holiness
 - i) And thus transform her once and for all into a statue, an image a holy icon,
 - (a) Something to be looked at, admired, but never known.
 - b) But maybe it is simply because they realize that it is not necessary;
 - i) Because according to Jesus, in her flesh and blood life of discipleship, she is
 - ii) And may it is when we follow her and Mother Theresa and all the others, as they followed him,
 - (a) Seeing in those our society rejects the presence of God
 - (b) And in serving them the service of God
 - (c) That we are saints too.