

Tuesday Reflection 22nd February 2022

Over the last several days the Mass readings have contained seminal texts from what could be called the Church's social teaching - St Luke's version of the Beatitudes and the Letter of St James.

To these we can add that great hymn, the Magnificat, which is prayed at Vespers every evening.

The Beatitudes - "Blessed are you ... Woe to you" present the vagaries of fate and the ultimate establishment of justice - as illustrated in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.

The question for us is to what extent we are responsible for ills of poverty, hunger and grief, and to what extent do we take responsibility for curing these ills - or, to put it another way, following Fr Naz's homily last Sunday - to what extent are we part of the problem and how do we become part of the solution? Albert Einstein once said that we do not solve the problems of the world using the methods that caused them in the first place. We are called to radical action.

In the Magnificat, Mary magnifies the Lord 'who has put down the mighty from their seat' - but how did they get on that seat in the first place? "He has filled the hungry with good things" - but why were they hungry in the first place?

I am definitely not in the stone-casting business, but do wonder what part we have to play, for example, in the cult of celebrity, regarding some people as being superior to others, or to what extent do our patterns of consumption lie behind an unequal distribution of wealth?

Could it be that we have become too comfortable? Today we celebrate the Feast of the Chair of St Peter - but one thing we know about St Peter was that he was tireless in his efforts for the Kingdom. Rocks don't sit on chairs, and we are not going to solve the problems of the world by sitting around on our backsides.

Michael Townson