

Church Vestibule

St. John Neumann Church



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Introduction:

Jesus' teaching and preaching most often centered around the proclamation of the coming of the "Kingdom." As the people of Israel experienced his acts of exorcism, healing and forgiveness, they came to know the peace, harmony and justice which are part of living totally under the "reign of God." They came to experience how the sense of well-being which He had lodged in their hearts would continue to grow and ultimately encompass all their relationships.

The world has never been a perfect place; not then, not now. We can never expect the Kingdom to break in fully during this life, but we can encourage its continual unfolding. The windows of our foyer demonstrate some of the attitudes (the Beatitudes) and actions (the corporal works of mercy) which will make God's Kingdom more present. We hope that this small booklet will offer some thoughtful meditations to encourage that in-breaking. ■■■

■■■
*E*ternal God, in whom mercy is endless

and the treasury of compassion – inexhaustible,

look kindly upon us and increase Your

mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might

not despair nor become despondent,

but with great confidence submit ourselves

to Your holy will, which is

Love and Mercy itself.
■■■

Closing Prayer:



If the principal teaching of Jesus was regarding the coming of the Kingdom, it is easy to see that salvation is not a "Jesus and me" event. Rather it is a fulfillment of the great commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mk 12:30-31) We fulfill that commandment by an attitude of loving service, just as we were loved and served when God sent His only Son to live and die for us.

We long to be a merciful people. St. Faustina, the advocate of God's mercy to the world, recommends this prayer on the right. ■■■

How to use the booklet:



All of our windows are meant to be sources of knowledge and prayer if we approach them with a spirit of openness to their message. If you can spend some time studying each individual window before reading the meditation suggested in this booklet, that would be ideal. Begin by asking yourself what the various objects in the window have meant to you in your Christian walk. Then, go to your Bible. Read the section of Scripture which contains the passages suggested for that window. Read the section three or four times, or if it is too long, choose segments of the passage to meditate on. Read slowly, savoring the message. You will find that with each rereading, different details stand out and different insights arise.

After you have spent time comparing the window and the Scripture, turn to the Meditation questions which have been included. Do these questions have anything to add to the insights you have been receiving? What has God been saying to you during this time? What have you learned? This dialogue is an invitation to prayer, a time for both listening and speaking. Close your meditation by thanking God for the blessings of your life. Ask for the needs you have become aware of and for forgiveness for your shortcomings. Acknowledge the message of hope which is symbolized in each of these windows, a hope which is extended to you personally and to the entire world. It is that hope which is a sure sign of the presence of the Kingdom. Finally, close your prayer time by spending a few minutes in silence; simply being aware that God is with you. ■■■



Window One:
Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

LK 6:20

And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.

MT 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

MK 4:19 . . .

but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit.

LK 12:15

Then he said to the crowd, "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

Window Fifteen: Bury the Dead

THOUGHT:

What is the basis of the Christian reverence of the human body? For part of our history, the body was discounted in favor of the soul. Influenced by Greek philosophical thought, the body has been seen as a prison of the soul, needing to be disciplined and ultimately overcome. In this system, the body was regarded as the source of sin and only the spirit was recognized as the revered part of human being. Unfortunately, remnants of that old philosophy are at times reinstated. But how can this be? Didn't God make the human body in His own image, and proclaim that it was good? Didn't the Word choose to assume flesh and walk among us? Wasn't much of His ministry aimed at healing the ills and pains of the body as well as the spirit? Didn't the human body of Jesus play an essential role in the salvation of all humankind? No, contrary to Greek thought, the human person is an essential composite of body, mind and spirit. It is the body which informs the spirit. It is also the body which makes each of us the unique person that we are. It is through the body that we learn, we love, and we strive to become Christ-like. In a glorified form, we shall spend eternity as the body-mind-spirit beings that we are. Because of this, the human body deserves all reverence, even after death.

In the Christian tradition, death also has symbolic importance. The contrast of life and death has often been used as an image of the capacity of the Spirit to bring good out of evil situations or out of seemingly hopeless events. For the one who trusts completely in Christ, there is no final death, for as the Scriptures say "Death has lost its sting." For the Christian, all forms of death, though frightening at the time, become doorways into new life. This is the cause of our hope.

FOR MEDITATION:

- How do I feel about my body?
- What wonderful things would be impossible if I had no body?
- What kind of person would I be if I were a man instead of a woman or vice versa?
- How different would I be if I were of a different race?
- How important is the body in making me who I am?
- What do I experience when I see the body of a child?
- The worn and lined face of an old person?
- Do I sometimes feel that only my spirit has worth?
- What does Jesus' incarnation say about that?
- When in my life have I felt as if I had died, or even wished I was dead? Was that the end of things?
- With time, what developed out of that seemingly hopeless situation?
- Could I describe the results of the event as an experience of new life?
- How have I experienced that "death has no sting," that Jesus can make everything new again?
- At some point in my life, have I experienced forgiveness, which made me feel as if I had come to life all over again?



Window Fifteen:
Bury the Dead

LK 7:22

And he said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.

LK 15:24

because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.'

JN 5:21

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also does the Son give life to whomever he wishes.

ICOR 15:55

Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

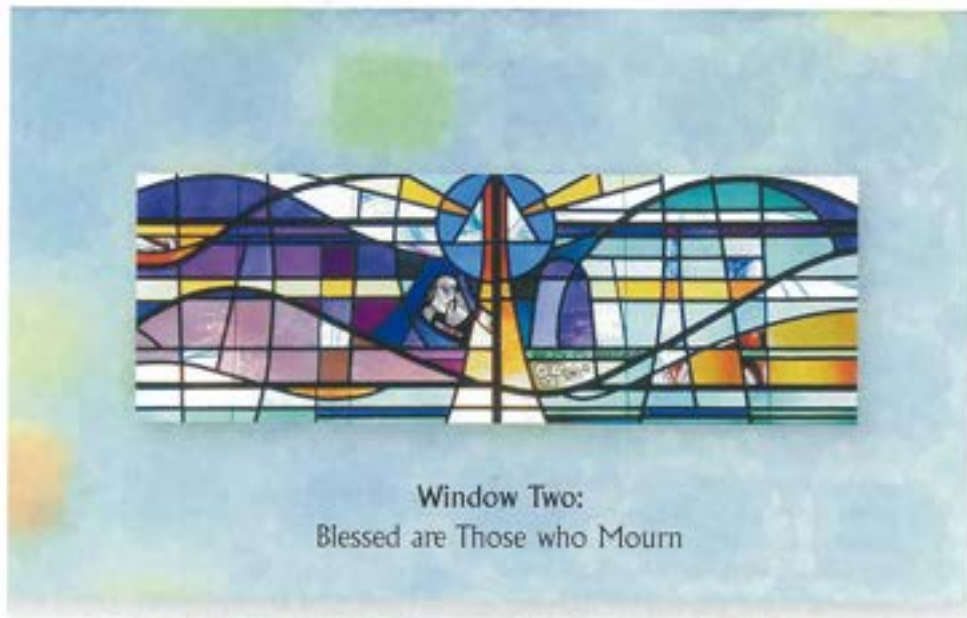
Window One: Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

THOUGHT:

Jesus came to the world as a poor man, born in a stable, without power or position, yet he changed the world. How? Poverty itself is no virtue. Grinding poverty can lead to hopelessness and despair. The Kingdom appears, not in the poverty, but in the grace to realize that only God has the power to supply one's needs, whether those needs are for personal survival, for health, for healing relationships or for any other human necessity. This is the meaning of poverty of spirit. It is the deep inner knowledge that my help is in the name of the Lord. Fear arises when I am distant from that sense of trust. To live in hope and trust, most especially in situations which seem hopeless, is to live under the reign of God, in the Kingdom. The entire life of Jesus, from His humble birth to His death on the cross, was focused on finding the will of God in each thing He was called to do. This singular trust was the source of His strength and His peace, even when He freely gave Himself in love on the cross.

FOR MEDITATION:

- What is my greatest talent? This talent is a special gift, but it can also become an idol if I trust it more than I trust God.
- Have there been times when this has happened?
- How do I feel when I cannot control a situation?
- Do I automatically abandon myself to God, or does fear have a tendency to overpower me?
- How easy is it for me to abandon myself to the will of God?
- How can I further develop this gift?



Window Two:
Blessed are Those who Mourn

MT 5:4

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

1THES 4:13

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.

RV 21:4

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, (for) the old order has passed away."

Window Fourteen: Ransom the Captive

THOUGHT:

So many things can hold us captive. The life of Jesus was a fulfillment of his proclamation that he had come to set us free. Of course, there is the most obvious, there are members of our community who are incarcerated. They are deeply in need of the assurance that they are neither disgraced nor forgotten. You might have a friend or family member who is incarcerated and needs the assurance of your visit. You might have an interest in prison ministry, but are afraid of it. For those who have moved into this area, they are routinely surprised at the pleasure which it generates. Some of these jailed men and women hunger for a deeper knowledge of the promises of the Scriptures. They want to learn to pray and are enthusiastic about joining some kind of prayer group. Many need to learn to read and write if they are going to have a chance at a new life. If you have had questions about whether this ministry is for you, the Archdiocese supports these ministries and has training for anyone who is interested. Call them.

There are other captives as well who need ransoming. A large segment of the population which begs for freedom are those who are addicted to substances or actions. There are many in our own family and community. We need to learn how to help them, rather than participating in their sickness. There are elderly people in apartments or nursing homes who have no way to shop, to get to church, or to the doctor's office. They need a visit and a kind word on occasion, and someone to look in on them routinely to be sure

everything is all right. There are caretakers for the sick and the dependent, who give up their own interests in order to be available for the other. For their own health, they need an occasional break, a time to exercise their own freedom. There are mothers whose whole life seems to center around the needs of their children and their families. There are disabled who are limited in where they can go and what they can do. The list goes on and on. Quietly living among us are many souls who are captive to their lot in life. They need awareness of their plight, and they need our concern and help. What will our role be?

FOR MEDITATION:

- Do I know someone who is incarcerated? Have I visited? Why not?
- Have I toyed with the idea of prison ministry?
- Do I need to look into it more carefully, rather than letting imagined fears rule my decision?
- Who do I know who is being held captive because of their life circumstance?
- What could I do to give that person some freedom?
- If I do not know someone personally, is there a church ministry which might allow me to be part of "ransoming the captive"?



Window Fourteen:
Ransom the Captive

LK 4:18

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free

ROM 7:6

But now we are released from the law, dead to what held us captive, so that we may serve in the newness of the spirit and not under the obsolete letter.

ROM 7:23

but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Window Two: Blessed are Those who Mourn

THOUGHT:

When mourning is mentioned, we most often think of a loss of a loved one as they pass from this world in death and that is certainly a time for deep mourning as we have all experienced. There are other times for grieving as well - grief for things which will never come to be. We grieve for a marriage which has died, forcing us to move apart, feeling as if we have lost a part of ourselves. We mourn for a relationship with our child which has gone astray. As aging diminishes our abilities, we mourn for the young vibrant person we used to be. We mourn loss of a profession, a life-dream, a cherished friendship. Each of these losses feel as if a part of us has died; and it has. But Jesus has named mourning as a time of blessing, so we must look beyond the grief to the growth. Grieving takes time, but there also comes the time to move on. Though we may not want it, we are being moved from one stage in our lives to another. It is time to investigate new ways of being, new relationships, new dreams. It is an invitation to be born again. With God's help, we can pass through this sorrow to a renewed time of life.

FOR MEDITATION:

- What am I mourning right now?
- What did I cherish about that relationship?
- Despite my grief, are there memories associated with that relationship which call for thanksgiving?
- Death does not exclude forgiveness. Is forgiveness in order?
- In general, what unfinished business needs my attention?
- Have I finished the time of mourning so that I might move on to other areas?
- What am I being called to do?



Window Three:
Blessed are the Meek

MT 5:5

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

MT 11:29

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves.

MT 21:5

“Say to daughter Zion, ‘Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

Window Thirteen: Visit the Sick

THOUGHT:

Sickness brings us face to face with the brokenness of humanity. Because of that, healing always played a major role in the ministry of Jesus. His healing presence, to saint and sinner alike, served as a powerful sign of the inbreaking of the Kingdom. Our concern for the sick connects us intimately to His ministry. It is one act of mercy which each one of us has the opportunity to be part of. Visiting a person who is very sick can be a difficult thing to do. Hospitals and sick rooms make many people uncomfortable, especially if they bring up old memories or if they put us in touch with our own vulnerability. But if we can forget our own fears and be concerned only with the needs of the sick person, the visit can become a pleasant one. We often worry - What will I say? A visit doesn't have to revolve around stimulating conversation, just our presence carries the message of love and concern. Praying for the sick, for their ailing spirit as well as for the body, should also be part of our ministry. Though it might be a new experience, we might even take the chance to pray with the person during the visit.

And what of sickness of spirit? The letter to James closely connects the need for forgiveness with the possibility of healing. Those involved in healing ministries have long said that healing is frustrated when the sick person is carrying personal sin or when there are areas of unforgiveness being

harbored in their heart. My offer of a non-judgmental, listening heart might be just the stimulus needed to initiate this inner healing.

We each have areas of brokenness arising from traumatic events of our lives. We each need inner healing. There is much work to be done, and each of us are invited to be a part of Jesus' healing ministry.

FOR MEDITATION:

- Is there someone who would benefit from a visit from me?
- What keeps me from making the visit?
- Is there some fear, some healing I need in my own life?
- Has my personal discomfort become more important than my friend's need?
- Is prayer for healing a routine matter for me?
- Am I sensitive to another's body language and remember to offer a silent prayer for their "worried look"?
- Are there areas of reconciliation which need to be addressed in my relationship with someone else?
- Is unforgiveness poisoning any of my relationships?
- Does a general attitude of unforgiveness color my life's outlook?
- What will I do about this?



Window Thirteen:
Visit the Sick

MT 4:24

His fame spread to all of Syria, and they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases and racked with pain, those who were possessed, lunatics, and paralytics, and he cured them.

MK 2:17

Jesus heard this and said to them [that], "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

JMS 5:14

Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

Window Three: Blessed are the Meek

THOUGHT:

The meek will inherit the land - how can this be? Isn't it usually the powerful who seize what they want? Doesn't the world prove that the "meek" are the losers? Yet, in the Christian tradition, it was the lamb who was slain who carries the flag of victory. It was the cross, traditionally seen as a sign of condemnation and defeat, which has become the salvation of the land.

Meekness is an attitude. It is the result of human freedom. It does not imply ineffectiveness, but commitment which rises from both prayer and action. But how shall we act? In each person's deepest core is the capacity to freely choose how she/he shall respond to any given situation. No person, no circumstance, can remove that freedom. In making decisions and acting on them, we become "who we are." That process is ongoing, carried out in our family fidelity, our business relationships, and our religious commitments. In our decisions, we either become more Christ-like, or we fall under the influence of darkness. Undergirding authentic meekness is the presence of Christ, the only certain source of power, the origin of contentment and rest. Then the land is ours!

FOR MEDITATION:

- What situation am I praying about right now?
- Am I also being called to assert myself?
- How can I act in a way which is effective and Christian, without resorting to violence of any sort?
- What tactics have my friends and associates recommended to me?
- Are these methods consistent with my commitment to living a Christ-centered life?
- What risks am I willing to take?
- Who can advise me and sustain me in my decisions?



Window Four:
Blessed are Those who Thirst for Justice

MT 5:6

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

MT 12:20

A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory.

HEB 1:9

You loved justice and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions.

Window Twelve: Cloth the Naked

THOUGHT:

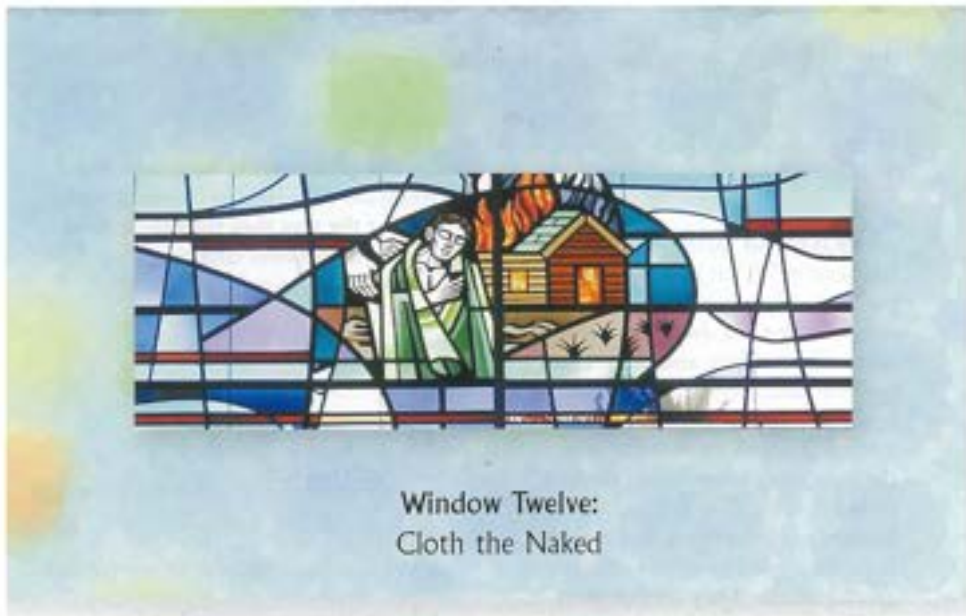
Nakedness is another condition which covers a variety of meanings. There are the physically naked who need our concern. We have seen many natural disasters in the recent past, mud slides in Central America, floods in the States and in South America, volcanic eruptions in the Islands. These events are often so quick and so complete that people are forced to flee from their homes with little time to save anything beyond themselves. We have also seen disturbing pictures of refugee camps where people are living with the barest of essentials, without clothing or bedding, and often without protection from the elements. They need our help. They need immediate assistance and they need help to secure their future once they return to their homes. We do this in the name of Christ.

Nakedness is also a symbol of helplessness. Like poverty, nakedness itself is no virtue, but it can be the source of a new awareness of one's total dependency on God, if that experience is allowed to arise. To have wealth can insulate one from the vagaries of life, or so it seems, but the experience of helplessness can quickly remind the sufferer that their only reliable help is trust in the providence of God.

Death is the ultimate nakedness. Even if we have been able to shield ourselves from disasters during life, we each face death alone and completely naked. We stand before the Almighty with nothing to hide our self from scrutiny. The one who has practiced abandonment during life will not be ashamed of their helplessness, but the self-righteous will suffer God's piercing gaze. To die in peace is the reward of having lived in comfort with one's own nakedness.

FOR MEDITATION:

- How full is my closet?
- Do I have too many things to wear? Why?
- Would I be embarrassed if someone looked in my closet?
- What security is offered to me by clothing?
- Am I unduly embarrassed if I am not dressed properly for an occasion?
- What is being threatened to make me feel that way?
- When have I experienced a feeling of helplessness?
- Am I able to stay with that feeling or must I distract myself immediately?
- What has helplessness taught me?
- Do I try to put my trust in God?
- Do I feel abandoned by God, or can I abandon myself to God in the situation?
- When I have seen natural disasters on the news, have I been moved to do something for those people?
- Have I done it?
- Do I sense a lack of empathy with another's plight? How has this happened?
- What has contributed to the deadening of my concern?
- What am I being called to do now?



Window Twelve:
Cloth the Naked

MT 25:38

When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?

ROM 8:35

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

GEN 3:10

He answered, "I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself."

JOB 1:21

and said, "Naked I came forth from my mother's womb, and naked shall I go back again. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD!"

RV 3:17

For you say, 'I am rich and affluent and have no need of anything,' and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Window Four: Blessed are Those who Thirst for Justice

THOUGHT:

Justice - rendering to each person what is rightfully theirs. Justice is not a favor given to the less fortunate; it begins with the understanding that we are all equals in God's eyes, and that the produce of the world is meant to be shared by all. Justice cannot flourish where prejudice and greed survive. It is a source of hope (symbolized by the anchor) for individuals as well as nations, and must therefore be pursued on both individual and social levels. We must want it as persistently as we crave food and water.

Justice begins in our own hearts. It is a fruit of our prayer life, our relationship with God, and expresses itself in our relationships with others. It requires awareness. The choices we make have consequences far beyond our individual spheres. For example, with Christ's attitude towards the marginalized as our model, we know that we cannot consume without an awareness of the cost of our consumption to the poor. We know that we cannot use people as if they were commodities. We accept the right of every person to have the opportunity for a decent life. In Christ, we are brothers and sisters, and responsible for each other.

FOR MEDITATION:

- Do I have an ongoing prayer life which is calling me into a deeper communion with all creation?
- Are there areas of prejudice in my own life?
- Towards whom? What can I do to heal this injustice?
- Do I practice justice in my own family and close relationships?
- Does my profession deal justly with the people it employs?
- With those it does business with?
- Does my profession treat all people with dignity?
- What am I called to do in my profession to make it more just?
- Have I kept abreast of the methods of production of merchandise which I use?
- What products am I using right now which have been constructed in an unjust manner?
- How will I reply to this?



Window Five:
Blessed are the Merciful

MT 5:7

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

LK 6:36

Be merciful, just as (also) your Father is merciful.

LK 18:13

But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.'

MT 26:11

The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me.

Window Eleven: Shelter the Homeless

THOUGHT:

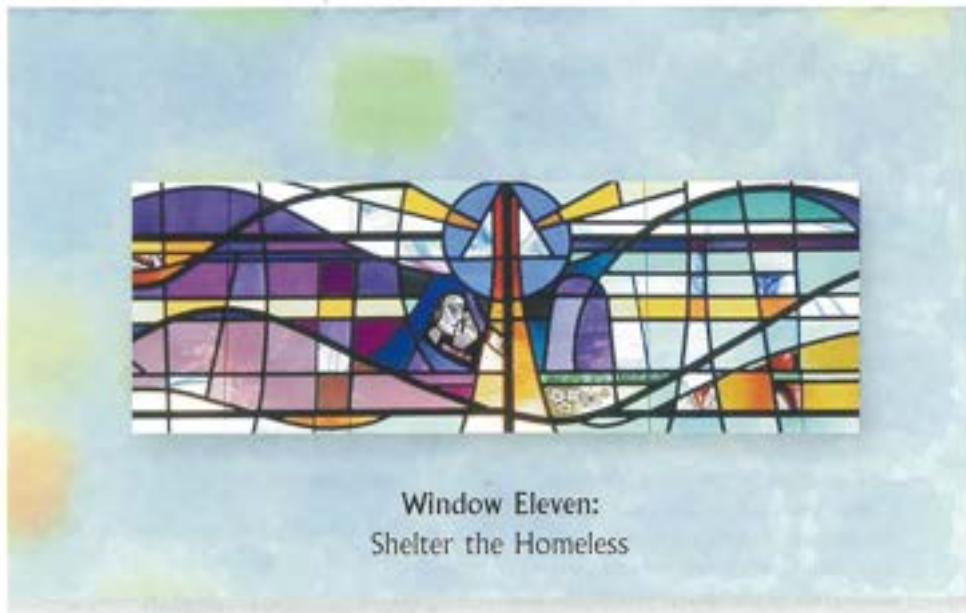
There is an old saying "home is where the heart is." That points to the multiple levels of what it means to have a home. Home is a dwelling, but it is also a place of love and care. On the positive side, there are those valiant souls who have chosen not to have a structural home. In order to minister to the poor, they have chosen to share their lot. They live in inner cities, in barrios, or in the open, and minister from their need to others who have greater needs. They are our glory.

But there is another, darker side, to homelessness. For many people, there is a need for the structure itself. Today we often hear the term "the working poor." These are people who have a job, but are paid such low wages that they are often left without funds to pay for lodging. In order to live a dignified life, they need shelter for themselves and their families. There are migrant workers who move with the crops and are never long enough in one place to be able to set down permanent roots. They need care; their children need education. There are the street people, those who have been excluded from social programs because they are not "sick enough," yet, there is no way they can fend for themselves. There are street children who have run away from abusive homes. There are orphans and "throw away" children, living on the streets, who have been sold as slave labor or for sexual exploitation. The list is long and frightening.

The philosophers have said that if you want to judge a people or a nation, look at the way they treat their most fragile, defenseless citizens. How do we rate as a nation? As a people?

FOR MEDITATION:

- What is the condition of my family?
- Is my home a place of love?
- Is my discipline firm but not abusive?
- Do my children know that no matter what - I am for them?
- Are my relationships healthy?
- Do I believe that some people deserve to be homeless? Why?
- If I expressed that idea to Jesus, what would he say to me?
- In what manner do I include the needs of the homeless in my consciousness?
- Is there some charitable organization which I might pledge to support?
- Do I at times help out in some support institution?
- Do I make my children aware of the needs of others?
- How can I do that?



Window Eleven:
Shelter the Homeless

MT 25:40

And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

I Cor 4:11

To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clad and roughly treated, we wander about homeless, and we toil, working with our own hands.

ACTS 2:46

Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart,

Window Five: Blessed are the Merciful

THOUGHT:

The quality which is most associated with God is that of mercy. The mercy which we display is no more than the act of giving to others what we have already experienced - God's unbelievably generous mercy to each of us. Jesus' life was one of compassion and mercy towards every person, regardless of their personal history. If we take His attitude as our model, we can identify many ways to demonstrate compassion. For as advanced as American society is, there are many among us who are forgotten, who are alone in their illness, who are unable to provide for themselves or for their families, or who have experienced discrimination for a variety of reasons. They are in need of our mercy.

Uncaring individuals foster an uncaring society. An uncaring society leads to general discontent. The actions bred by discontent eventually cause widespread suffering. But, by practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, we not only become personally more merciful, but we are agents of change for society. We can all name individuals who have moved society towards greater compassion. In their own ways, whether performing acts great or small, they are modeling the Christian ideal. Still, the need for mercy remains. How shall we respond?

FOR MEDITATION:

- What part of myself is in need of mercy?
- In what way do I need to be more gentle and forgiving of myself?
- What will I do today to show mercy towards myself?
- Who is in need of the mercy of my forgiveness?
- In what ways have I been displaying vengeance towards that person, rather than mercy?
- What can I do for the relationship?
- Who do I know who is in need of mercy?
- What is their specific need?
- How can I display compassion towards them?
- What compassionate organization do I support regularly?
- Am I doing enough to alleviate suffering in the world?
- What more should I do?



Window Six:
Blessed are the Pure in Heart

MT 5:8

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God.

MK 12:33

And 'to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself' is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

PS 24:3

Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord? or who can stand in his holy place? He whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean. who desires not what is vain, nor swears deceitfully to his neighbor.

MT 18:3

"Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Window Ten: Give Drink to the Thirsty

THOUGHT:

Like hunger, thirst is another powerful symbol for Christians. We thirst for water, water which brings life - and which can threaten life; water which cleanses and purifies. Christ has pledged to send living water, the actual presence of the Spirit within us. This is a powerful promise.

Christian life begins with water. Christ was plunged into the water of the Jordan. Supported by his relationship with God's Spirit, he was then driven out to the desert where He was prepared for His public life. It was a new life which would ultimately pass through death to culminate in resurrection. We too are plunged into Baptismal waters so that we might die with Christ in order to rise to a new life in which "I live no longer, not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). At the end of our lives, our casket will be covered with a white Baptismal robe, a sign that the life which had begun in the waters will finally culminate in resurrection.

It is the daily dying and rising, under the power of the Spirit, which is the process of all human living. We must die to many things so that we might move on to new depths of life. The sorrow is that there are many people who have no recognition of this truth, and so they thirst. Deep thirst can be a terrible thing. It tears at one's inner being. It cannot be quenched by power, by "things," or even by loving human relationships. Only the living water of the Spirit can satisfy it, and without that, we thirst.

FOR MEDITATION:

- In the past, what was something I really thirsted for?
- After I received it, was that the end of all my desires?
- Was I completely satisfied?
- What do I really want right now?
- Will it make me happy?
- Will it answer all my needs?
- What am I doing right now which makes me unhappy, but which I continue to do?
- Have I hurt others in order to satisfy those wants?
- Do I suffer from an addiction?
- Do I thirst for alcohol, food, money, things, sex . . . ?
- What will I have to do to slake this thirst?
- To whom can I speak?
- Do I dare risk being happy?



Window Ten:
Give Drink to the Thirsty

MT 25:37

Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?'

JN 4:10

Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

JN 7:38

Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: 'Rivers of living water will flow from within him.' He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Window Six: Blessed are the Pure in Heart

THOUGHT:

Being clean of heart proposes an ethical way of living, one which rises from a total commitment to God, and to God's plan. The just person listens to and obeys God's will. His actions reveal his total dedication to what he has heard. Because of this attitude, the one who is pure in heart is filled with calm confidence. On the other hand, self-absorption yields self-anxiety. One who lives with a divided heart is often anxious because of the distractions of surface worries. Their trust is in themselves and their personal capacities, rather than being in communion with God and therefore being free to care for those God loves.

Children have the innocence of pure hearts. Their joy is unbounded, for they have complete confidence that the ones who love them will take care of them. Without fear, they face life with bold innocence. There were many times when Jesus called for his followers to observe these little ones, setting them as a model of the fruit of living in the Kingdom of God. That same invitation is offered to us today.

FOR MEDITATION:

- What is God asking of me?
- How is my life meant to give glory to God?
- What am I afraid of right now?
- Is it for some member of my family?
- For my work?
- For my health?
- For what?
- How would I feel if I put that concern totally into the hands of Jesus and left it there?
- What would I do for others if I was not "drained" with worry?
- If I began to live for others as well as for myself, would it make a difference in the quality of my life?
- Am I too concerned with others' problems and not taking care of my own needs?
- What would I have to do to bring balance into my life?



Window Seven:
Blessed are the Peacemakers

MT 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

ISA 2:4

They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks;

JN 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

ROM 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the holy Spirit;

GAL 5:22

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,

Window Nine: Feed the Hungry

THOUGHT:

A banquet has always stood as a powerful symbol of the Kingdom. When Jesus fed the hungry, there were literally baskets of food left over, so great had been his abundance. As Jesus did, so are we to do. As a work of mercy, we have been told that we will be judged by the way we respond to others, with hunger symbolizing the basic needs of every person. The Gospel of Matthew has reminded us that when we alleviate the pains of hunger and thirst, we are ministering to Christ himself.

There are other ways in which the pains of hunger are experienced. The language of hunger is commonly used as a symbol of human desire. People hunger for many things - for freedom of speech and religion, for a decent life style based on equal opportunity, for their children to grow up healthy and free of fear - and much more. Living in a free country, we might sometimes forget the human hunger for freedom from all sorts of oppression, whether physical, spiritual or mental. When our founding fathers wrote the Bill of Rights, their own experience had alerted them to the dangers of human oppression. Despite some of their own cultural limitations, it was their intention to make opportunity broadly available. The freedoms which they proposed are the basis of the life style which we have inherited and for which we should be especially grateful. Our freedoms are special graces which have been given to the American people.

FOR MEDITATION:

- How am I being called to feed the hungry, physically, mentally and spiritually?
- What freedom(s) do I most hunger for?
- How have I seen those freedoms threatened?
- What am I being called to do, in my state of life, to ensure freedom of all people?
- Do I experience all people as brothers and sisters?
- Whom do I exclude? Why?
- When was the last time I voted?
- By what criteria did I evaluate my choices?
- How am I teaching my children about respect and freedom?



Window Nine:
Feed the Hungry

MT 25:37

Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

MK 8:8

They ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over—seven baskets.

I COR 2:12

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given us by God.

GAL 5:13

For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love.

Window Seven: Blessed are the Peacemakers

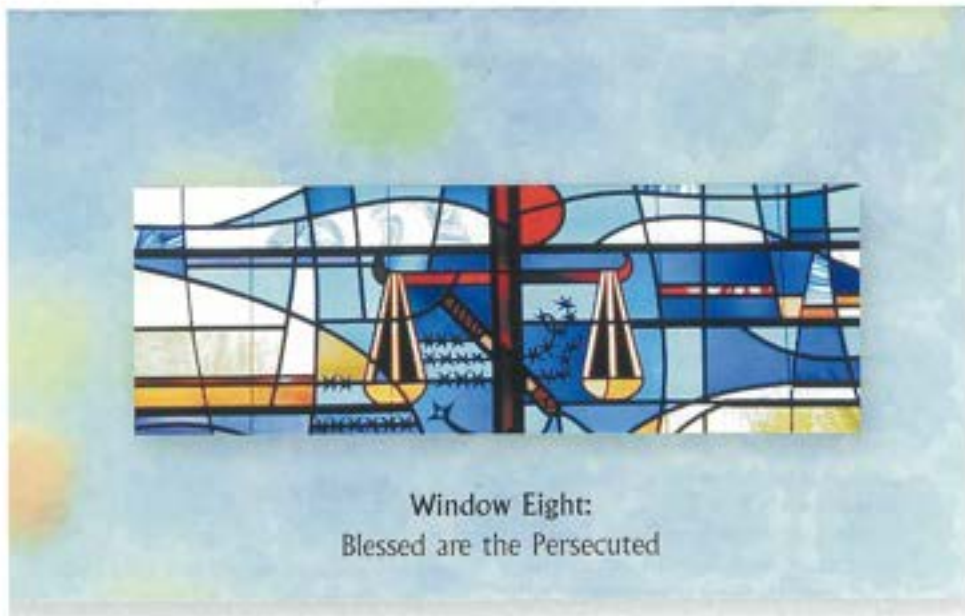
THOUGHT:

What does it mean to be a peacemaker? That is a very important question today, as we are threatened by violent forces which seem to function on a worldwide scale. Pope Paul VI struck at the heart of the issue when he told the world "If you want peace, work for justice." He rightfully reminded us that peace and justice are intimately linked.

We have often heard it said that peace must begin in our hearts. This is no mere cliché; it is a valuable truth. The individual who is contentious and unforgiving, lacking in patience and generosity, often breeds a contagious atmosphere of unrest. Peace is undermined. Anxiety and mistrust are promoted. On a broader scale, the world's myth that a nation is best judged by its wealth, its prestige and power, has been a source of conflict throughout all human history, as one nation tries to control others in order to fulfill its "needs." By contrast, justice finds worth in every person and demands that they be treated with empathy, fairness, dignity and respect. For the person and the nation whose relationships and policies reflect these Spirit-filled virtues, peace will be their reward.

FOR MEDITATION:

- Do I think of myself as a kind and patient person?
- What is it that most often makes me angry?
- What is being threatened?
- If someone looked at my check stubs- what would the stubs reveal as important to me?
- Are my investments made with a concern for the way companies treat their employees?
- With the way they do business with others?
- Does my way of living promote a nation which is sensitive to the needs of others?
- Do my voting choices take into consideration the attitude of our leaders regarding the poor in this country and in other countries?



Window Eight:
Blessed are the Persecuted

MT 5:10

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

2 TM 3:12

In fact, all who want to live religiously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

ROM 12:14

Bless those who persecute (you), bless and do not curse them.

1 COR 4:12

When ridiculed, we bless; when persecuted, we endure;

Window Eight: Blessed are the Persecuted

THOUGHT:

Much of the New Testament was written by people who had a first hand knowledge of persecution. They knew that their Savior had been killed unjustly. They had seen members of the young Christian community experience harassment and even death. This has always been a part of our Christian history. It is not an easy job to follow the Master, but we have been reminded 'No slave is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.'

For Jesus, persecution was not defeat. In fact, it became the cornerstone of His ultimate, eternal victory. If that was true for Him, it is also true for us. For one who does not know Christ, persecution seems to be the ultimate degradation. For Christians, persecution stands as a witness to the importance of their deeply held beliefs. For the faithful who are persecuted because they will not bow to injustice or evil, fidelity and Christ-like character are being formed. Every person who is persecuted because they have determined not to bow to evil, stands as a prophetic presence. In doing so, they are bringing in the Kingdom of God.

FOR MEDITATION:

- What situation am I aware of right now which is unjust?
- How am I reacting to it?
- Does an unjust situation lead me to depression or am I able to see it as a possibility for grace?
- Do I hold the situation in prayer?
- Have I discerned how I am being called to respond to this situation?
- How might I encourage the "stream of grace?"
- What is my attitude towards a person who is unjust?
- Do I hate the perpetrator and wish for vengeance?
- How would Jesus judge this person, this situation?
- Can I do the same?