

**Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

These are the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount also known as *The Beatitudes* and found in the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 5:1-12. Jesus continues: Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

These past months while you all dear Parishioners of Saint Therese have been away due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, I would inform you and change the words slightly of the Lord to: Blessed are those who *are protested against* for the sake of righteousness: for *ours* is the kingdom of heaven. You see since Pentecost Sunday, the Great Solemnity which concludes the Season of Easter, we have had protesters here at Saint Therese on the public sidewalk along Fourth Street/Route 66 in front of the beautiful Shrine of the Little Flower, our home. These protesters come with Trump-Pence 2020 flags, MAGA caps, U.S. flags, handmade signs, no masks, prominently holstered handguns and made the point of identifying their affiliation with Calvary Church and Legacy Church. They also come with seeming hatred as they protest us and our marquee messages and curiously videoed themselves criticizing that we had not reopened our Liturgies to the public after the Shutdown. One Sunday of the Protests, the marquee said: BLACK LIVES MATTER. WE GRIEVE WITH THE FLOYD FAMILY. SUPPORT POWDRELL'S BBQ AND OTHER BLACK OWNED BUSINESSES. On another Protest Sunday the marquee read: VIOLENCE IS THE LAST REFUGE OF THE INCOMPETENT (ISAAC ASIMOV). THANK YOU, GOVERNOR, DR. FAUCI AND CDC FOR KEEPING US SAFE— WE TRUST YOU. NO HUMAN IS ILLEGAL IN GOD'S REALM. TO COUGH IS

HUMAN—TO MASK IS DIVINE. A GOOD CATHOLIC SHOULD MEDDLE IN POLITICS—POPE FRANCIS 2013.

A personal challenge for me has been that in bringing their strident anger to the threshold of our home here at St. Therese—their hatred has brought out my own. I struggle to respond to their attacks with love and forbearance, in the moment forgetting our shared kinship as siblings in Christ. I need to remember the old African proverb: *The Lion does not turn around when the small dog barks.* Saint Therese Parish and School with our cathedral-like Shrine is perhaps the “Lion” of the proverb. Last year we became the public face of the *Welcoming the Stranger* ministry here in Albuquerque when we were the donation center for those fleeing violence and economic poverty from Central America. In all things, we strive to live out our Vision and Mission: *Seek the well-being of the city to which I have sent you. Pray for it to the Lord. For in seeking its well-being you shall find your own.* Jeremiah 29:7

Let us remember we are but strangers in a strange land without a true “homeland” here on this earth. As those protested against for the sake of righteousness—we pray that ours is the kingdom of heaven...and so we journey onwards. Please pray for those who protest. May we become better and better at turning the other cheek. Pray for Joleen, her boyfriend Brian, their friend Eddie and the others. Pray for me in my continual discernment of God’s Loving Voice in all of this. Pray that the Lord may heal all divisions and draw us rejoicing into the Light of His Love.

Peace and only good things, *Father Vincent Paul Chávez*

15 August 2020, Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven

Another thought-provoking message for the marquee:

IS GOD A RACIST OR IS IT MY CHURCH?