

Realm Message, July 22, 2021

## Go Ahead, Do Something

Part of my daily devotions includes reading the daily reflection from Father Richard Rohr. Rohr is a Franciscan priest and spiritual director. He is the founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation, which promotes social engagement that is grounded in spiritual reflection and meditation. Yesterday's message is one I'd like to share with you because it opens up the Beatitudes of Jesus in a whole new way.

I pray it will be a blessing to you as well.

With thanks, James

### Go Ahead, Do Something

*My fellow Albuquerque resident Megan McKenna is an author, storyteller, and theologian who challenges us to imitate Jesus. She writes of the importance of translation when it comes to understanding the meaning of Jesus' words:*

The blessings and woes have so much depth and latitude, so many layers of meaning that are unveiled throughout the gospel of Luke, especially in the parables. Even the meaning of the word beatitude is rich and complex when seen from different perspectives. . . . [In Elias Chacour's book *We Belong to the Land*] there is a marvelous description of a beatitude that enhances our understanding of what Jesus means when he says "blessed are you."

*Knowing Aramaic, the language of Jesus, has greatly enriched my understanding of Jesus' teaching. Because the Bible as we know it is a translation of a translation, we sometimes get a wrong impression. For example, we are accustomed to hearing the Beatitudes expressed passively:*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.*

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

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

*"Blessed" is the translation of the word makarioi, used in the Greek New Testament. However, when I look further back to Jesus' Aramaic, I find that the original word was ashray, from the verb yashar. Ashray does not have this passive quality to it at all. Instead, it means "to set yourself on the right way for the right goal; to turn around, repent." . . .*

*How could I go to a persecuted young man in a Palestinian refugee camp, for instance, and say, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted," or "Blessed are those who*

*are persecuted for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”? That man would revile me, saying neither I nor my God understood his plight and he would be right.*

*When I understand Jesus’ words in Aramaic, I translate like this:*

*Get up, go ahead, do something, move, you who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for you shall be satisfied.*

*Get up, go ahead, do something, move, you peacemakers, for you shall be called children of God.*

*To me this reflects Jesus’ words and teachings much more accurately. I can hear him saying: “Get your hands dirty to build a human society for human beings; otherwise, others will torture and murder the poor, the voiceless, and the powerless.” Christianity is not passive but active, energetic, alive, going beyond despair. . . .*

*“Get up, go ahead, do something, move,” Jesus said to his disciples. [1]*

*Megan McKenna concludes:*

The beatitudes mean deeper mercy for those who experience more divisive misery, deeper blessings for those whose hope is dimmest. They give an ultimate authority to certain people and their plight in the world. They signify not just a religious attitude, but a social attitude toward realities that should not exist among humans.

[1] Elias Chacour with Mary E. Jensen, *We Belong to the Land: The Story of a Palestinian Israeli Who Lives for Peace and Reconciliation* (HarperSanFrancisco: 1990), 143, 144.

Megan McKenna, *Blessings and Woes: The Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Plain in the Gospel of Luke* (Orbis Books: 1999), 22–23.

## **Prayer For Our Community**

*Loving God, you fill all things with a fullness and hope that we can never comprehend. Thank you for leading us into a time where more of reality is being unveiled for us all to see. We pray that you will take away our natural temptation for cynicism, denial, fear and despair. Help us have the courage to awaken to greater truth, greater humility, and greater care for one another. May we place our hope in what matters and what lasts, trusting in your eternal presence and love. Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our suffering world. Please add your own intentions . . . Knowing, good God, you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God. Amen.*

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You can learn more about Richard Rohr as well as read his daily reflections at [cac.org](http://cac.org).

With thanks, Rev. James Murray