

Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Most weeks, when I start this column, I bring up many of my favorite spiritual writers to see what they have to say about that week's readings. But this week, when praying about the Beatitudes, one name surfaced loudly and clearly: Father Greg Boyle, SJ, founder of Homeboy Industries, the world's largest gang intervention and rehabilitation program, (and yes, there is now Homegirl Industries, too.)

Greg Boyle understands those who are poor, and weak, and grieving. He employs hundreds of them, some right out of prison, in his bakeries and restaurants in Los Angeles. He also understands, intimately, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. He's at the top of that list.

His teaching on the Beatitudes is simple. It's just geography. It's not about **WHAT** to be, but **WHERE** to be, which is always with the vulnerable. True blessing isn't health or wealth, but finding life and joy in solidarity with those the world rejects, even if it leads to crucifixion, since that's where Jesus is.

So, a re-write of the Beatitudes might be, "You know you're in the right place if...you are singlehearted, working for justice, showing mercy, working for peace."

But how do we who have never been materially poor crowd in with, as Richard Rohr writes, the poor in spirit, whose "material poverty has broken their spirit"? My only answer is to hang out with people who serve those who are poor with abundant love.

Christ, who will always side with the poor, begs us to place ourselves in proximity to "the weak of the world," so that we too may learn from them. Theirs is the kingdom.

Have you ever been inspired by someone who is "humble and lowly"?

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