The Original Blessing: A Forward-Leaning Faith



When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he began to speak and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5: 1-12)

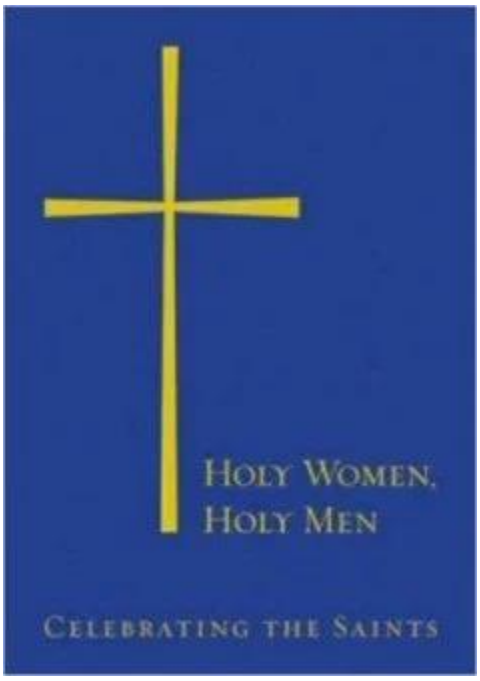
Ashrei (אַשְׁרֵי) is the Hebrew concept behind the words Jesus would have most likely spoken when he offered the Beatitudes as the opening salvo for his transformational proclamation—a call to purposeful participation in God's incarnational reign on Earth. *Ashrei* doesn't describe an impermanent state like "happiness"; rather, "fortunate" or "forward-leaning" is more precise. *Ashrei* motivates a state of active holy favor

Hagioi: Set Apart for Holy Work

Similarly, St. Paul used the Koine Greek term *hagioi* (ἅγιος) to describe the local congregations in Rome, Philippi, and Corinth. There is a subtext to Paul's use of this word. Newly baptized Christ-followers were undertaking a transformational process to receive God's grace and adoption into Christ's new reign. They are divinely set apart for holy and righteous work—they are *makarioi* (μακάριοι). These Pauline communities were diverse, spanning disparate geographic and cultural locations, echoing how Matthew's Jesus navigates the complexities of upholding the Torah's prophetic guidance even as he strives to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17) and commands his disciples to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-19).

The Great Calendar Controversy

This tension between a universal calling and institutional boundaries fueled a recent Episcopal Church debate over who should be liturgically recognized as a saint.



The debate sprang from an experiment to increase the cultural diversity of the church's calendar, with General Convention approving a supplemental book for trial use from 2009 until 2015. However, the church eventually backtracked, adopting much stricter guidelines for who should be "sanctified." The resolution stated:

"Those commemorated should have been in their lifetime extraordinary, even heroic servants of God and God's people … In their varied ways, those commemorated have revealed Christ's presence in, and Lordship over, all of history; and continue to inspire us as we carry forward God's mission in the world.

I have a word or two that I'm tempted to offer regarding that resolution, but I won't.

A Wider Cloud of Witnesses

Instead, I want to lift up the saintly people transforming our outdated ecclesiastical understandings of cosmology, evolution, and psychology. Carl Jung's definitive work on individuation and the archetypal nature of Christ provides a profound pathway to God. This Jungian statement resonates deeply: *'Vocatus atque non vocatus, Deus aderit'* (Whether summoned or not, God will be present).

Consider also Margaret Wheatley, a devoted Tibetan Buddhist practitioner whose life has assuredly been devoted to peacemaking, righteousness, and mourning over profane injustices. Her lifelong work profoundly shapes the well-being and resilience of communities worldwide. Her books, such as *Who Do We Choose to Be?* and *Restoring Sanity,* define lifegiving ways of leading and being present in today's world.

Walking in Love: Our Baptismal Calling

Ritualistic worship, faithful prayer, and devoted willingness to trust in God through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are holy, wise ways to be human. That said, sainthood came into being long before Jesus of Nazareth was born, and saints are still being born today. The interdependent nature of divinity and humanity cannot be strictly contained within the New Testament or fourth-century patristic thought. Christians across denominations often demonstrate hubris when definitively declaring who is or isn't a "heroic servant of God."

I invite us to remember our Baptismal promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons. Let us be faithful to our scripture, tradition, and reason, even as we reach out beyond our Anglicanism to "walk in love as Christ loves us," rendering our lives as living sacrifices to God’s greater good, free from constrictive doctrine and prejudice.

Blessings along The Way, Jim+