

**BIBLE SOCIETY – REFLECTION FROM FR ASHELY BECK FOR RACIAL JUSTICE  
SUNDAY 2019 (6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME)**

On Racial Justice Sunday we are invited to root our prayer and practical work for racial justice in our response to how God speaks to us in the scriptures at Mass this weekend. The focus of the Sunday this year is the exploitation of workers – both migrant workers in general and particularly victims of trafficking and slavery. For over a hundred and twenty years the Catholic Church has championed the rights of workers because of what we believe about the dignity of every person created in God's image and the nature of human work itself, as being part of how God wants us to fulfil his will for us in our lives. Moreover the rise of populist nationalism – in this country, the rest of Europe and throughout the world – has led to an increase in racial discrimination and hatred which Christians need to discern and denounce.

The prophet Jeremiah in our first reading this Sunday (17: 5-8) is facing in his society a level of moral chaos and political disintegration which perhaps we can recognise. But his call to the people and their rulers is to trust in God and not in 'man' - human institutions, especially the power of the State, which has always claimed so much power over people's lives. For Christians trusting in God rests on the resurrection of Christ from the dead, the belief which defines us as a community, which St Paul reflects about in our second reading from 1 Corinthians (15:12, 16-20). Those who oppress others in the world put before people false heroes and role models based on power and violence: by contrast our God is one who was crucified as a common criminal and who came back to life through God's power.

Luke's version of Jesus' Beatitudes (6:17, 20-26) unambiguously shows God as being on the side of the poor in history. The poor who suffer now will be vindicated by God. Moreover in Luke's version Jesus who tells the poor that they are blessed and happy also tells the rich that the tables will be turned and that they will be punished: perhaps this is why Luke's version of the Beatitudes is less well known than Matthew's. All of us are challenged today to put the poor first, especially migrants and others who are victims of labour exploitation.

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