

Reflection for
the 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time
October 22 and 23, 2016

- In Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells us that those who humble themselves will be exalted while those who exalt themselves will be humbled.

- We can probably all rhyme off a long list of celebrities – the exalted of today's Western culture - but do you know a truly humble person? A man who volunteers at our community food bank comes to mind. He is an unassuming man who has faithfully gone about his weekly volunteer work for over fifteen years, always obliging, never complaining. He was caught by surprise this year when he was given a volunteer award. He never realized that he was doing something special and certainly never expected to be recognized for it.

- In a way, he reminds me of the new Auxiliary Bishop for Toronto, Bishop Robert Kasun. In an interview with the Catholic Register, he said that when he received the call that Pope Francis was going to make him a bishop, he figured that someone had made a big mistake. He still jokes that someone must have dialed a wrong number. And apparently he is not the first bishop appointed by Pope Francis to suggest that someone in Rome must have got the wrong person. These new bishops are humble men who have spent their priesthoods as pastors or

teachers, quietly ministering to their flocks. To quote Pope Francis, they were “shepherds with the smell of sheep” and were deliberately chosen to be bishops because of it.

- Pope Francis himself displays the characteristics of humility. When asked early on in his papacy who he was, echoing the words of the tax collector in today’s Gospel, he didn’t list off his accomplishments and former roles, he answered that he was “a sinner, whom the Lord has looked on with mercy”. And at his first appearance before the people in St. Peter’s Square after being elected Pope, he said, “First I ask a favor of you: before the Bishop blesses his people, I ask you to pray to the Lord that he will bless me”. He who had been exalted, humbled himself before God and the people.
- Have you ever **felt** humbled, by an experience or person? I did a few years ago on a solidarity trip with Development and Peace to Ecuador.
- This was my first experience in the Global South and we spent the initial days high in the Andes visiting the small indigenous Kichwa communities that some of our partner groups worked with. Everywhere we went we were shown such generous hospitality. After a meeting with a Kichwa women’s group in a tiny village, we were ushered to the little community centre as they wouldn’t let us leave without sharing some food. They prepared what

they had - boiled eggs, beautiful Andean potatoes and mint tea. And they generously gave us the best treats from their little community store. The generosity and their pleasure at doing this for us was humbling.

- Throughout our trip, we learned and came in contact with many new things. Although I didn't speak Spanish or Kichwa, I heard a word used over and over again - *compañera*. I asked our translator what it meant. It is usually translated as "partner" but I gradually came to see that it was much more than that, more than "colleague". It is more like sister, or kindred spirit, imbued with the sense that you and I are in this together working for a noble cause. I felt truly humbled the first time we were addressed as *compañeras*. That honour in part is what has inspired me to deepen my commitment to Development and Peace.
- Development and Peace has given me much more than a trip to South America. It has given me a new world view and purpose, along with a feeling of solidarity with people in the Global South. When Development and Peace experienced attacks and government cutbacks, I felt in a small way what it must be like to be persecuted as some of our partners are. When our priorities seemed to be out of step with the direction of the wider church at the time, I felt what it must be like to be marginalized from the main stream, to be on the outside. Those were difficult times.

- Development and Peace has been a way that I have been able to act on God's call to hear the cry of the poor and oppressed as we are called to do in today's readings.
- This year, Development and Peace is continuing with the theme of ecological justice for the most vulnerable. We are asking the federal government to recognize the essential role that small family farmers in the Global South play in feeding and cooling the planet. We are also asking the government to ensure that their voices are heard. I invite you to sign the postcard to the Prime Minister about this at the back of the church when you leave.
- Next year is Development and Peace's 50th anniversary - 50 years since the bishops of Canada gave us our mandate to support the poor and oppressed in the Global South, educate Canadians about the causes of injustice and inequality and act to bring about change.
- In honour of the 50th anniversary, Development and Peace is inviting you to consider becoming a member. It's free and lasts a lifetime. As a member, you can become part of a democratic movement that worked to end the war and famine in Biafra, Nigeria; advocated alongside Nelson Mandela to end apartheid in South Africa; supported mothers in South America confronting dictatorships; demanded the cancellation of foreign debt of the world's poorest countries, to name but a few. You can see the 50-year timeline at the back of the church with many more of

the struggles we have worked on. There are membership application forms as well.

- Sirach tell us that the Lord is a God of justice who hears the cry of the oppressed. As his followers, we are fortunate that our church here at St. Joe's and the wider church in Canada offers us so many ways to join Him in the struggle for justice, according to our own calling and personal gifts. Development and Peace is one of those ways.