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“I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out” (1 Cor 7:29).

*1 Cor 7:25-31; Luke 6:20-26*

Belief that Jesus would return soon was the context in which St. Paul encouraged his church members in Corinth not to make any major life decisions. Among these was marriage, projecting your life into having family and children. His instruction was more about preparing for the *Parousia* than about foregoing this or that state of life, but it became the basis for counseling celibacy as detachment from the world to gain greater freedom to serve God.

There is something of this same spiritual expediency in the Beatitudes of Jesus. They describe lives located between this world and the next with radical virtues to build God’s future, which is both here and not yet. Disciples are called to live in the blessedness of that future even if it appears to this world to be a life of poverty, hunger, mourning, exclusion and insult. By committing yourself to live as Jesus did, you will find richness, satisfaction, laughter and joy because the Kingdom of God is already yours.

Unlike Matthew’s version of the Beatitudes, Luke adds their opposites, “Woebetides” that describe the fate of those who indulge this world’s benefits but lose the Kingdom. Luke, linked more closely to Paul, may have had his more cosmopolitan Greco-Roman audiences in mind than the Jewish community in Antioch Matthew was writing for. But the call to a radical life is the same, and Matthew will balance his list in the same way in Chapter 25 in the Parable of the Last Judgment.

Today we commemorate the life of St. Peter Claver. As current events compel a more accurate history of the horrors of slavery and the destruction of indigenous peoples in colonizing the Americas, figures like Peter Claver and his predecessor, Bartolome de las Casas, stand taller for their defense of and service to millions of people deemed subhuman by their conquerors. Their raised consciousness in the worst of times prompts us to engage the same issues in our own time. The brutal world they witnessed was the economic and social foundation of our own, and their radical claim that “Black and Brown Lives Matter” echoes in our history.

Effective social change rests on conversion of heart. If it is true that the Chinese ideogram for “crisis” combines “risk” and “opportunity,” this generation has the chance to choose between beatitude and woe by addressing some of history’s greatest injustices with courage and clarity. Facing this risk, Paul’s warning applies: “The time is running out.” Seizing this opportunity, we have the chance to turn crisis into an enormous leap forward that will move humanity closer to the Beloved Community, where history and hope must eventually meet.

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