

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Weekly Commentary - 2019-06-02 through 2019-06-08

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...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 pure in heart, for they will see God...Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. - Matthew 5: 3,5-6,8,10-11

There is one story of justice and righteousness in this week's report ([please click here to read in full](#)). A pastor and his wife in India were arrested in January 2016 along with some of their parishioners on false forced conversion charges. It has been announced that the Madhya Pradesh state high court last month overturned their convictions. But even here, this is not a 'good' story: it has now come to light that during the 2016 arrest police took their six year old son into custody and stripped and beat him. He has largely recovered but still words fail to describe this kind of depravity.

This week we report on murders in Kenya, Nigeria, and the United States; on abductions in the Congo, Egypt and Pakistan (most abductions likely included rapes); on arrests in Canada, China and Tajikistan; and on attacks against churches or the homes of Christians in India, Israel, Mexico, Uganda, and the United States.



Church in Jiba, Democratic Republic of the Congo – courtesy Fides



Co-Cathedral of St. Thomas More, Tallahassee, Florida, USA – courtesy Michael Rivera and Wikipedia

We also have 'deep background' stories from the Central African Republic and China.

The Canadian arrest is notable. It involved a street preacher who has had several unjustified brushes with police or other local agencies. He went into a heavily pro-LGBTQ neighborhood in Toronto and began to preach on a sidewalk. His actions were not entirely blameless: on the video he initially tried to engage with people who had turned their backs on him, and when he got no answer he twice said "OK, a bigot". Otherwise he said nothing objectionable from a Christian viewpoint, to the point of emphasizing the ubiquity of sin in everyone's lives. Then a crowd assembled with a rainbow flag and began to physically menace him by using their bodies to push him against walls. Yet in the end he was the one arrested.

The comments on the Charismatic site that reported this news were interesting. Most were posted by the usual clever trolls who have driven more orthodox Christian commenters from the site. They were quite critical of the preacher, with some reason, but they stated he deserved arrest and gave no criticisms of the crowd. We can be sure that these same trolls would have been quite critical of a Christian crowd that had quietly menaced a homosexual advocate.

And that brings us to another story. June is Pride Month (although a cynic might ask, aren't they all?). On June 1st the Catholic bishop of Rhode Island tweeted that his fellow Catholics, especially children, should not attend Pride events. He was promptly savaged in the media. The next day he issued a letter on his diocesan web site that was an interesting but ultimately futile blend of defense and conciliation. The media – including major regional newspapers - ignored his defense of his role as a teaching minister of his church and falsely claimed his effort to conciliate was a retraction.

A survey of Scripture shows that 'the proud' receive universal condemnation, and 'pride' is almost always seen as a spiritual danger. Only in Paul's Epistles do we see pride mentioned in a positive way, as applied when fidelity to Christian life and evangelization can be seen. In a way, it's not fair to single out the homosexual movement for this criticism because there are so many worldly movements in opposition to Christ's message of salvation. Is there any such opposition that is not prideful?

Blessed are the pure in heart, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. The definitions of 'righteousness' and 'pure of heart' are undergoing forced change in our society, but we all understand the Christian meaning of the phrases. *Blessed are the poor in spirit and the meek;* that at least cannot be changed to match a prideful world. Here is what should tip the scales of our understanding: *Blessed are you when people falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.* When those opposed to the Christian message must lie in the media or to police to suppress it and advance their cause, they only prove the prophetic truth of the Beatitudes.

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