

**Reflection Given During Prayer Service
On the Occasion of the Visit of Rigoberta Menchu to Postville, Iowa
November 8, 2008...**

In our Gospel we heard the familiar words.... **“Blessed Are You!”**

As I return to Postville and join you for this extraordinary day, my heart is filled with memories...my heart is filled with love...my heart is filled with respect. It is filled with memories, love and respect for all who have gathered in this Church and for all who are not able to be here but are with us in spirit...those friends and family members of ours who up until May 12, 2008 called Postville home and possibly by now have either moved to another state or have returned to Mexico or Guatemala. To all who are here in person or in spirit I reach out to you and say...**Blessed are you!**

Blessed are you for believing in your own goodness and dignity, as well as the goodness and dignity of your children. You were willing to risk a variety of dangers so that you and your children might live.

Blessed are you for your willingness to suffer and struggle for your life and your rights.

Blessed are you who have continued to endure pain, hardship and heartache because you believed in the value, dignity and rights of the human person...the right to migrate...the right to food...the right to shelter...the right to education...the right to live with dignity. **Yes, blessed are you.**

Blessed are you because you believe in peace, justice and freedom. **Blessed are you** because you are willing to struggle and accept deprivation and hardship so that you and your families can live in peace and experience justice and freedom.

Blessed are all of you who endured innumerable injustices at Agriprocessors simply because you never lost hope...simply because you wanted to feed and educate your children, whether your children were with you in Postville or whether they remained in your native country. **Blessed are you** who endured pain in order to give to your children a future full of hope.

And blessed are all who have gathered for this prayer, who are descendents of 18th, 19th or 20th century immigrants and have been willing to stand in solidarity with our Latino brothers and sisters offering presence and assistance.

Blessed are you, too, especially the people of Postville, for seeing the value of diversity. You welcomed the stranger. You offered hospitality and permitted our Hispanic brothers and sisters to become your friends.

In the introduction to a book entitled Border of death Valley of Life by Rev. Daniel Groody, Father Virgilio Elizondo, a well known theologian, has said: *...In the voice of the wounded stranger we hear the voice of God.*

It is in all of you who have been wounded in innumerable ways within your own countries and within the United States that I personally have heard the voice of God. **Through you I have seen the face of God** and I consider myself **blessed**.

I close with this thought. Father Groody, a priest committed to immigration reform asserts: *Life in the United States is the place where many immigrants experience a contemporary Golgotha, but it is also the place where some experience the rising to a new way of life.*

Blessed are you for continuing to hope that the Golgathas you have experiencedand there have been many ...will bring you to new life.

I want to assure you that we will continue to stand with you, work with you and pray with you. We will continue to challenge employers who exploit workers. We will continue to challenge our legislators. We will continue to challenge one another until that day comes when you will be able to **Rise to new life. It is at that point that together we will stand and proclaim: Blessed Are You! Blessed is our God!**

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St. Bridget's Church
November 8, 2009