

November 1998

# Spiritana

NEWS  
MISSIONARY

A photograph of a sunset over the ocean. The sky is filled with dark, textured clouds, with a bright orange and yellow glow from the setting sun. The sun is visible as a small white circle on the right side of the horizon. In the foreground, two silhouetted figures stand on a sandy beach, looking out at the waves. The water is dark with white foam from the waves breaking. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Male and female  
God created them  
and He blessed them

Genesis 5:2

# A Beatitudes Christian

John D. Geary, CSSp

The traditional name is the Beatitudes from the Latin word meaning "blessed". In more modern translations the word used is "happy". Most of us regard those words as being close enough to be synonyms. But the scholars warn us that happiness and beatitude are not quite the same thing. Happiness has more to do with the state one would like to find oneself in in the here and now of everyday existence. Beatitude is a state we would prefer to put off until we reach the other side of death.

But no quibbling over the best English word to give the exact flavour of Jesus' famous utterance in the Sermon on the Mount – for that is where we find these "happy" sayings — can disguise the paradoxical nature of the statements they make. We are called on to pronounce as happy those who are poor, who hunger and thirst for justice, who are persecuted, who are, by any ordinary human measurement, among the wretched of the earth. We have been dealing with these extraordinary statements for two thousand years: imagine the impact they must have had on those who heard them for the first time. "It is difficult for us to appreciate the paradoxical character of the beatitudes. They institute a moral revolution which has not yet reached its fullness. They are opposed to all the conventional values of the Jewish and the Hellenistic-Roman world and pronounce blessings on those who do not share in these values.



Not only the external values of wealth and goods are repudiated but also those goods of the person that are achieved and defended by self-assertion and strife." (John L. McKenzie)

We Spiritans throughout history have been called to embrace those counter-values and to align ourselves with those who by human standards are among the have-nots. It is not an easy assignment, but there is nothing more in keeping with the Gospel than to embrace these values and to side with those who must live them daily. We don't always succeed in living up to the extraordinary demands that being a Beatitudes Christian imposes on our inconstant human nature. But during this coming year we invite you to dwell along with us on the revolutionary effect that the struggle within Christianity to live up to these astonishing demands, and even our partial success in doing so as practising Christians, has had upon the history of humanity. In so dwelling on them may we come, under the inspiration of the Spirit, to implement, to embody them, in our attempts to live the Gospel.

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Front Cover: "One Day More..." Gulf of Mexico. Photo © Paul Raymond Wharton.

Back Cover: Congo Kinshasa. Photo courtesy of Pentecôte sur le monde.

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# Give without charge

Joy Warner, Lay Spiritan

In April my husband and I visited my family in England and were surprised to see at the back of every Catholic church, no matter how small or rural, notices inviting people to sign up for a bus trip to Birmingham to participate in a demonstration at the G8 meeting. We later read in the newspapers that 70,000 people from many Christian denominations had responded to this invitation and had formed a prayerful human chain around the building where the heads of state of the richest countries were meeting. The impetus for this event was the Jubilee 2000 movement, which is organizing the world's largest ever petition calling on the G8 leaders to celebrate the new millennium by lifting the burden of unpayable debt from the poorest countries. The petition will be presented in June 1999 at the G8 summit in Cologne.

In the biblical tradition the year of Jubilee marks a new beginning. It is a year in which the oppressed are set free and captives released, the debts of the poor are cancelled and property is returned to its rightful owners. Pope John Paul II in the spirit of Jubilee, urges all Christians "to raise their voice on behalf of the poor of the world and to consider reducing substantially, if not cancelling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations."

For each dollar wealthy countries provide in aid

to poor countries, they take back \$4 in interest on debts. Africa spends four times as much on debt repayment as it does on health care. At this time eleven hundred and seventy-three Spiritan priests and brothers are working in 25 countries in Africa trying to alleviate the devastating impact of the debt-induced poverty, especially on women and children. Here in Canada we have a chance, through Development and Peace's 1998/99 Education and Action Program, to make a small gesture of solidarity with those Spiritans by signing the Jubilee 2000 petition and getting others to sign it.

## Forgive us our debts

In the version of the Lord's prayer which I grew up saying (before I became a Catholic) the line "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" didn't resonate very loudly with me. After all, with my one shilling pocket money a week, I wasn't in a position to lend or borrow! I suspect that for most of us the word 'debt' usually conjures up loans, mortgages, and credit cards. But when I stopped to reflect, I began to think about all the people to whom I was indebted: parents, friends, teachers, health care workers, garbage collectors, mail carriers, janitors — the list became endless. Although many of these are paid for their work, they are not reimbursed for going the extra mile, for the caring and compassion they freely give to those around them. The scriptures are full of passages urging us to give and not to count the cost. "You received without charge, give without charge" (Matthew 10), "If you lend to those from whom you hope to get money back, what credit can you expect?" (Luke 6) and my favourite, "Be compassionate as God is compassionate... Give, and there will be gifts for you; a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured in your lap; because the amount you measure out will be given back" (Luke 6).

Many years ago Aldous Huxley wrote: "Our present economic, social and international arrangements are based in large measure upon organized lovelessness." Let us dare to envision a world based on organized loving kindness and take one small step towards its creation by signing the Jubilee 2000 petition. ☪

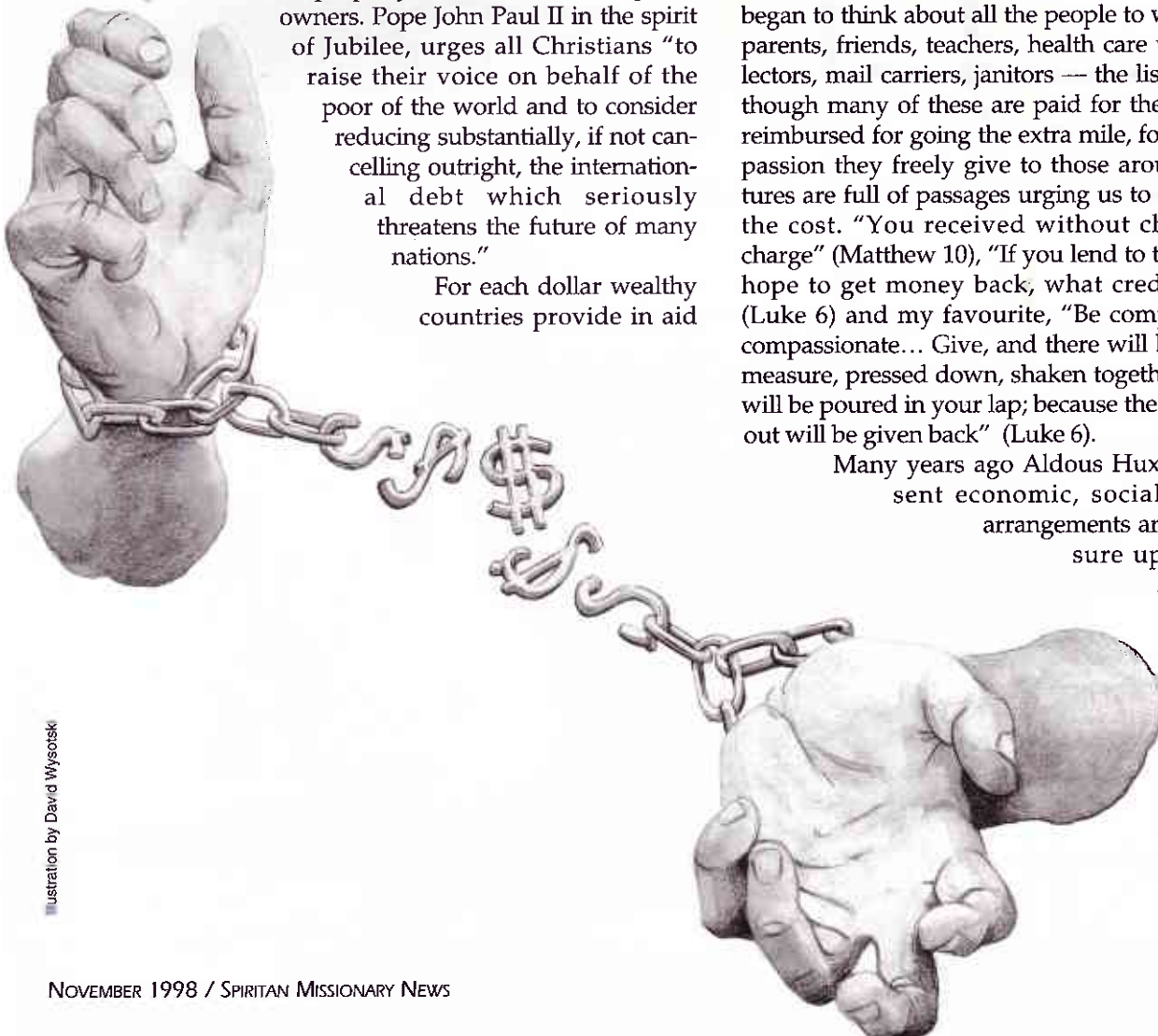


Illustration by David Wysocki

# Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord

Psalms 118:26



**SUNDAY**   **MONDAY**   **TUESDAY**   **WEDNESDAY**   **THURSDAY**   **FRIDAY**   **SATURDAY**

SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>December 1998</b> S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31		<b>February</b> S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28		5	6	7	8	9
Epiphany of the Lord		St. Elizabeth Seton			Bl. André Bessette	Eastern Catholic / Orthodox Christmas	Mary, Mother of God World Day of Peace Spiritian Martyrs, Congo	St. Basil and St. Gregory
10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
Baptism of the Lord		St. Marquette Bourgeois						
17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time		Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins						
24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time		St. Timothy and St. Titus						
31								
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time		Conversion of St. Paul			St. Angela Merici	St. Thomas Aquinas		

# January 1999

**Spiritans**  
The Congregation of the Holy Ghost