

Here we are, four months after Prisca left us, and it is still hard to believe that she is gone. She was an extraordinary woman who loved her homeland, loved her husband, loved her children, loved the church, loved her new homeland, and wanted nothing more than to do the will of God and spread joy to the world. We were blessed to know her.

Prisca faced many challenges in life. She left Cameroon to re-establish her family on foreign soil because she loved them and believed in a better future. She sacrificed herself especially for her children to help them grow strong in their culture, their faith and their family. When André discerned a vocation to the diaconate, she stood at his side, supporting him and loving him, standing in wonder at the ways that God was acting in her life and in the lives of those closest to her. She entered a new kind of family at that time, a family of men and women drawn more closely into the arms of the church—not for the glory that they would receive, but for the service that they were called to give. None of this was easy, but she made it look that way. She carried a confidence that made other people confident. Her faith inspired others to have faith too—just as Jesus taught his disciples.

Jesus opened his Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes, a proclamation that we've heard time and again. It amazingly fits multiple situations from birth to marriage to death. Hearing it over and over continually reminds us how to live the Christian life. The Sermon on the Mount was Jesus' first discourse in Matthew's gospel. He used it to introduce himself to his disciples, and to lay out for them the way that they should walk. He understood their potential; he also understood their suffering. He started teaching them with the Beatitudes. If you listen to them afresh, they don't sound right at all: "Blessed are the poor in spirit.... Blessed are they who mourn.... Blessed are the meek.... Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness.... Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness.... Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you.... Rejoice and be glad." How could that be? How could we do that? When you're feeling hungry, you don't feel blessed. When you are persecuted, you don't think you're blessed. Suffering by itself is never a blessing. But suffering for someone or something can be. When you suffer for the sake of those you love, or for the values that guide you, you know you are blessed. You rejoice and are glad because your suffering has improved the life of someone you love, has let something greater than you endure.

Brothers and sisters, we are here today because four months after Prisca died we are ever more convinced that she improved our lives through steadfastness to values that endure. She gave of herself so that others might live. We have witnessed her faith. We have witnessed her service. We have witnessed her suffering. We have received life.

Today we pray to God who raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus Christ made us his witnesses to proclaim our hope in eternal life, a hope that he suffered to give to us. May this God, who created Prisca as a gift to us, may this God now lead her to a new, better and final homeland, where she will rest away from suffering, far from hunger, rejoicing in the blessed gift of peace.