



THE BEATITUDES

“Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’” (Mat 5: 1-3)

Dear Friends,

If we truly want to pray and intercede, we must first learn to listen because God speaks in the silence of our heart. And in order to be able to perceive this silence, to hear God, we need a pure heart, because a pure heart can see and hear God. The Beatitudes shows us the way, the path that Christ asks us to follow with the help of the Holy Spirit.

The nine Beatitudes teach us following the examples of Christ, Mary and the Apostles that mercy, prayer, poverty, love... are paths of faith and hope, which allow us starting right now to live and experience difficulties and sufferings, joys and sorrows, hardships and persecutions, sickness or infirmity, in close union with Jesus, who intercedes for us with the Father.

The Beatitudes allow us to discover the secret of love in Christ's life and in his union with the Father. They lay out the way to understand his life, his words, in order to try to follow Christ's footsteps in our daily lives, in love and prayer, upheld by the Holy Spirit.

“Lord in your mercy, be with us!” May we empty our hearts so that they may be filled up with You, Lord!

Jean-Michel Vuillermoz

“ The fact of being with You is a benefit, which surpasses all that I could ever imagine...”

Blessed John Henry Newman

Spiritual Letter

The Beatitudes

Storms, earthquakes, massacres, men's fury, odious crimes... We are not spared all this. If the last century saw more martyrs than the combined amount of martyrs in the previous centuries, our century won't be left out. In the midst of all this darkness, let us listen to the Beatitudes.

It seems to me that the serenity of the place where they were uttered, the majesty so simple and beautiful of the Lord, emerged in the midst of the misfortunes of the Roman occupation and in the midst of compromises of all sorts. The human heart has a dark side! Yet, the Lord lifted his eyes and simply said that he believed in man. Blessed! The Son of God made man proclaimed the possible happiness of humanity that is not devoted to death but to

life. Here already are the words of resurrection. Jesus spoke and unveiled our destiny: he saw man's path which will pass through the cross and life.

Indeed, all the beatitudes are built upon a reversal of fortune. Already in the Bible, the eldest was rejected in favour of the youngest, the rich man lost his opulence and God pampered the poor man. The Son of God opened his sermon by maintaining a biblical continuity, but he also announced his death and resurrection. The promised kingdom, the heritage of the earth, the vision of God, this vision so ardently sought after by Moses—"Pray, let me see your face"—all that is promised and given.

There is the great porch of Christian life. The saints experienced the Beatitudes. Intercessors, we ask that our brothers and sisters attain the happiness of God.

Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.
Spiritual Counsellor to the Intercessors

He who purifies his heart sees God's image within himself

The Lord Jesus does not say that it is blessed to know something theoretically about God, but to possess God in oneself: Blessed are the pure of heart," he says, "for they shall see God."

Now I do not think that this means that God has offered a vision of himself, face to face, to those who have purified the eyes of their souls. But perhaps he explains what the noble sentiments of the beatitude offer us more straightforwardly in another context, namely, when he says, "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21) This verse leads us to the conclusion that they who have cleansed their hearts of all creaturely passions behold the image of the divine nature in their own inner beauty.

... Therefore, cleanse yourself of the filth caked over our heart by paying close attention to your conduct, and your godlike beauty will again shine forth. Just as the sun's rays shimmer on a piece of steel once a whetstone has removed the rust from it and it produces a lustre, so the true splendour of the inner person, which the Lord calls the heart, reappears when it has rubbed off the unsightly blemish that arises from the mould of evil. Once again it apprehends its similarity to its archetype and is good. For that which is similar to the good is assuredly good itself.

Therefore, he who sees himself sees in himself that which he desires. This is the way a person who is pure in heart becomes blessed; beholding his own purity, he beholds the archetype in the image. One can see the sun without actually looking into the sky by viewing its reflection in a mirror, and see it no less genuinely than those who view its circular form in the sky. In the same way you yourselves, if you strain toward the perception of the light, if you return to the grace already prepared for you in the image, will possess in yourselves the object of your search. For purity is freedom from passion, and divinity is alienation from all evil. If, therefore, these things are in you, God is assuredly in you.

Thus, whenever your mind is uncontaminated by any evil, free from passion and separated from every blemish, it is blessed with sharp sight, so that, being purified, it perceives that which is invisible to those who have not been purified. Once the mists of matter no longer

obscures the eyes of the soul, it clearly sees the blessed vision in the pure, clear atmosphere of the soul. And what is that blessed vision but purity, holiness, simplicity, and all such luminous emanations of the divine nature through which God is known?

Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermon on the Sixth Beatitude*

Experiencing Happiness with Jesus

The Lord unites our lives. He passes on to us his message of love and truth, his message of the richness of joy, which is at the very heart of suffering: these are the Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes are a sort of cross: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." It is true that the cross is the source of everything. The world reposes upon it. At the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, the proclamation of the Beatitudes instructs us and even more, tells us that we are sons in Christ, at the heart of God's mystery, in his light. We must remain in his light in order to be able to give him our heart, because ultimately, it is the only thing that he asks of us. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This is a synthesis of the whole Gospel. It is a condensed version of that total dependence that we must have with respect to the Lord. This dependence allows us to live according to God's will. Christ was the poorman *par excellence*, the one who submitted totally to his Father's will, the one who did not want to do anything else, because he said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me to finish his work." (Jn 4:34)

We must ask the Lord to discover the depths of the love there must be within us and to discern the depth of our heart with respect to it. We will see that it is not an easy thing to do. At each moment, we have to convert in order to discover ever more deeply God's truth...

...May we be seized by the way the Lord teaches us to love, for it is the single thing that is important in the world. In any case, it is the only thing that counts in God's eyes. Current affairs pass, but what remains is to be found most deeply embedded in our heart.

Let us ask the Lord to enter in to this mystery of humility, dependence on God, and this poverty to live the truth of the Kingdom of Heaven from now on. In spirit and in truth, we already adore. Everything will develop in the light. Let the Lord transfigure us, transform us, make us into renewed beings through God's truth. We will be new, luminous, joyful beings, filled not with an exultant joy, but with the joy that the Lord gives, which is his own joy and which perhaps makes us bear with suffering but in truth the Word of God, his love and his truth.

Father Marie-Joseph Le Guillou, o.p., *Sermon on the Beatitudes*

The Beatitudes...a Condensed Version of the Lord's Thoughts

These words, more than any others, presuppose total adherence and an intense communion with the Father's will. This message of the Beatitudes does not tolerate any compromise, it is announced! And the person who hears it is not to negotiate with it: they receive it or they reject it. Its content is indeed less moral than spiritual.

The Lord does not propose only one option. He points out the path to happiness. And not happiness on the earth, which is fragile and volatile, but the 'beatitude.' We call it 'beatitude' when it refers to the participation in the glory of God in heaven, which the virtue of hope contains. This beatitude or eternal happiness can already be experienced on earth. It is given to those who live out one or other of the nine paths proposed and which we must

ask God to give us the gift of. They are the paths of poverty, gentleness, compassion, obedience, mercy, purity, peace, persecution and patience. Everyone is invited to experience and live out at least one, according to their charisma. They must absorb it, rejoice in it, seek it out, beyond the happiness available on earth (which is also promised, but in surfeit Lk 12:31), this revealed happiness: **being in harmony with Christ and with the Father.**

Father Thomas Philippe, o.p.

In Silence, Listen; In the Murmurs, Intercede.

We are all called to rediscover the secret place of silence, that interior cloister where the murmur of the Spirit is revealed to us and calls us **to intercede** like Christ for all men... A secret and silent space that we discover and that God comes to fill according to how much we open ourselves to his fullness.

Eloi Leclerc, *The Wisdom of a Poor Man (Sagesse d'un pauvre)*

The Beatitudes and the Cross

The first broad strokes of the Gospel life were outlined by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes were our first sketch of the way. We trusted that they would introduce us to the rest of the Sermon on the Mount which remains the blue print of what our life is intended to be — a blue print to which we keep returning to readjust our building plans for we keep mixing a whole lot of sand with the few stones.

If we are intent on giving our lives to the Lord but have no desire to this joyfully we may well have doubts as to whether our wills are truly in line with God's will...

... We need to realise that the Beatitudes are not beatitudes, they are *not* happiness. "Enter into the joy of your Master" is said to the good servant when he has *finished* his serving. This is the joy that beatitude or happiness consists in. (...) Our joy, the joy that we experience in our human hearts is fragile and comes and goes.

As for the Beatitudes, they are the absolute opposite of what people call joy; as soon as they are separated from Faith they are seen to be contradictions. Each one of them carries within it either its own cross or the threat of a weighty, tangible, certain cross; but at the same time the hope of a good that is present but invisible or a good that is in the future. But we never succeed in bearing our cross without it remaining a mystery.

Madeleine Delbrêl, *The Joy of Believing*, translated in 1993, p. 138 ff

*Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing away:
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things
Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.*

-- St. Teresa of Avila

An Intercessor's Testimonial

After more than twenty years as a committed Intercessor, it is important not so much to establish an appraisal, as to maybe to assess the situation.

What to say about the multiple 'heart to hearts' with Lord, that occur at fixed dates?

First of all, that they structure a life of Faith. With the weekly masses, these monthly meetings were unavoidable in my relationship with God. They are like small white stones that show me the path to follow.

Yet certain questions arise: are these prayers of intercession done properly? Are they sufficient? Efficient?

For a start, an hour a month amounts to not much. It seems like an easy commitment.

When it is a question of getting up in the middle of a short night's sleep, when your professional life is teeming with events, it is much more difficult! So when my prayer was 'badly done' or indeed forgotten or postponed, I offered it up. It led me into a continuous thought process concerning my relationship with God. It is perhaps a form of offering up of one's daily life that the Intercessors also propose.

I could cite Jacques Philippe in his book, "Time for God", when he says, "How can you live your private prayer correctly if you spend the rest of the day searching for yourself? If you are too dependent on material things.... You must realise that there is a style of life that can favourably enhance or on the contrary obstruct private prayer." He suggests linking private prayer and daily life together. I remember once when the holidays were upon me and I had built up a certain amount of tardiness in my prayer rendezvous. Consequently, I organized a series of sessions where I caught up at the beginning of the night.

Every day became lit up by these sessions.

This refers back to the question of sufficiency. Very quickly, these rendezvous are no longer isolated like a string of rosary beads-islands on a calm sea. Just like Sunday masses, these 'heart-to-hearts' call for more of them.

What to say about their efficiency? Were they not just a support to structure a life of Faith? It is not up to me to answer this one, but I firmly believe in the Communion of Saints. I believe that the Christophers, Annabelles... and all the others for whom I prayed, for whom I implore a healing received graces. For me, that too is the meaning of offering up one's daily life, accepting that you cannot measure the efficiency of our actions or interventions.

Let us pray for one another and with one another.

GENERAL INTENTION

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Through your resurrection Lord Jesus you give us life. In You, we have placed our hope; in You, we believe that through your death and resurrection, you save the world.

Lord, we entrust to you all religious and political minorities who suffer rejection and persecution in the world, particularly in the Middle East, Pakistan, Eastern Europe, Asia... in countries ruled by religious or political dictatorships. Remain close to them Lord, You who are "the resurrection and the life."

Psalm 145: Praise to the Lord our God

I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.
They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty –
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
They tell of the power of your awesome works –
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
The Lord is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.