



THE BEATITUDES

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'
(Mt 5:3)

This Beatitude reminds us how much 'poverty' is at the heart of our intercession. It invites us to take up an attitude of humility, simplicity, austerity and confidence in the Lord in order to be able to bring a look of compassion, respect and listening vis-à-vis the suffering person, who confides their distress in us.

Leaving a prayer intention or taking up an intention in your prayer is also a way of showing poverty: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." (Lk 18:55) Jesus' reply lives up to the request: "Go, your faith has saved you." And we, the Intercessors, we deposit the whole chain of intercession in Jesus' heart and beg for his mercy towards our intercession.

We place ourselves in an attitude of gratitude every time we receive or give: God transforms our poverty into a filial spirit and a source of fraternity with others.

Anne-Laure & Jean-René Bregéon

SPIRITUAL LETTER

In announcing the Beatitudes, Jesus provided a portrait of himself. When he invites us to become 'poor in spirit,' He wishes us to share in his happiness. He is the first, the original, poor person: his look, his way of life, his way of looking after the little ones, as well as the great of this world, everything shows simplicity, without removing nobility. He is burdened with nothing. His poverty is freedom. He is adapted to, in the simplicity and rightness of his heart, to the 'kingdom of heaven.'" In this kingdom, he is "the Son," who receives everything from the Father. That is the happiness that inhabits his "spirit." He wants to share it with us. Sharing, that is the word that illuminates this Beatitude. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." (2 Cor 8:9) Can you imagine and measure this impoverishment? The eternal Son of God became one of us! He divested himself in order to allow us to share his richness: divine life, his life received from the Father. He shares eternal life with us.

In order to become poor according to the spirit of the Lord means therefore that we too must divest ourselves. It does not mean living on the street and lengthening the list of the homeless. St Vincent de Paul liked the rich because he could ask much of them in order to save those who lived in misery and 'giving' helps one escape the traps of wealth. No, it refers to an attitude of the heart: being dependent on God who gives and seeking only the happiness of others.

There is a possible selfishness in marriage, that of rejoicing in being so great together, of being amazed by children who succeed...and stopping at that! That's not enough: we are not the owners of love and joy. Everything comes from God and everything should be given back. It is true that in order to receive happiness, work is necessary and long years of conversion... Happiness is often a reality beyond all the obstacles in life. Yes, but what has been received must be given back. This is the logic of the love that comes from God.

Concretely and taking our cue from Jesus, hospitality is a sign of poverty. Hospitality is the richness of that love, which is the fruit of many conversions and is offered to others. Those who come to us see a welcoming table. They find comfort during their ordeal, peace in the midst of uncertainty, courage to take difficult decisions, and energy to 'get up and go,' as we say. Hospitality is the virtue of those who are no longer encumbered by themselves and are open to others. The founder of the Petit Frères des Pauvres, Armand Marquiset, had a motto, which best described his whole life's work: Flowers before bread. He helped so many poor people...but above all, he wanted each person to regain their dignity. Hospitality is primarily that, where each person finds understanding, esteem and respect.

So then the kingdom of Heaven is present, that kingdom where each person is a child of God and is infinitely loved. "The Father himself loves you," says Jesus. (Jn 16:27) That is the incomparable wealth offer to all.

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

WHO ARE THE POOR?

It is the first Beatitude (in Matthew's Gospel) and the only one in the present tense: *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. It is the doorway in and the one that makes the subsequent Beatitudes possible. Let us therefore try to understand its meaning and see how to truly live it.

Who are the poor? Most certainly those who are not self-sufficient, who need to get what is necessary to live on from others and are subject to their good will. Those who are not well-considered and even less loved...those who endure solitude...those who endure instability, since they have no insurance for today and even less for tomorrow...those who have lost their sense of security, their pretensions, and who realise that they cannot do much to change others or themselves...those who have experienced failure and the limits of their capacities in various ways...

I can think in particular of the sick and aged, who experience and feel so strongly their fragility, dependence and instability, who see themselves weakening, losing their faculties and often their relations and are confronted with suffering. I can think of the unemployed, who experience instability, uncertainty and rapidly self-doubt. I can think of parents, who experience a true feeling of poverty when faced with their children. When they were young, they were able to lead them on what they considered to be the right path. But sometimes they see them giving up what they held to be important or choosing dangerous paths and they realise that communication between them is difficult. I can think of my own experience as a priest, where I am faced with all my limits and with the poverty of my testimonial.

But is it enough to be poor to be poor in spirit? When I think about it, I realise that we can spend our time complaining, recriminating...we can be envious and jealous...we can rebel against others, against ourselves, against God...we can turn in on ourselves, give up getting involved or living, despair...Personally, do I not let myself be caught up by these feelings?

What is it that characterizes the poor in spirit? They recognise their poverty and agree to it. They agree to appear such as they are. They give up judging others or judging themselves. They recognize that what they have, what they are, is already because of others and because of God. They hope, ask and trust. Consequently, they awaken other generousities. They trust others and God, despite everything. They dare to undertake, to bear witness, because they trust not in themselves, but in God. They fight not for themselves, but for all their brothers who endure the various kinds of poverty. Justice for all is their goal. They give thanks every time they were able to do something or every time they received something. They even know to thank God or others before receiving, because they are completely trusting. They change their poverty into filial spirit and a source of fraternity with others.

To all of us who wish to place our trust in Him, he tells us, "Up you get the poor in spirit. The kingdom of heaven is yours." Yes, let us stop complaining, our strength is in the Lord. He is counting on us. He calls us.

Father Michel Meunier
Parish of St Eloi, Paris
Homily, 30 January 2011

PRAYER TO ST VINCENT DE PAUL

St Vincent de Paul, Apostle and bearer of Christ's love to the poor, let us love God with the strength of our arms and the sweat on our faces.

Help us to give ourselves up to Providence and be faithful to discovering his action in all the events of our lives. Encourage us in our desire to perceive and accomplish God's will.

Give us a tender heart that is compassionate before the misery and suffering of others, especially the most vulnerable in this world.

Accompany us in our service near to people and intercede with the Son of God so that we become in

Our work,
Our family,
Our area,
Our parish,
Our communities,
Passionate about his Gospel of Love.
Amen.

PERSONAL PRAYER OF POVERTY

Do I dare to tell you that I am delighted with the feeling of complete powerlessness and failure you experience when trying to do personal prayer? It is not a hardness of heart on my part believe me, but the conviction that this tough ordeal has great benefits in store for you.

You have abundant intellectual and material resources; you have a good job; you are admired and feared; you are loved and obeyed; many people and things depend on you; and here, in one area, that of personal prayer, you are failing... You desperately attempted to succeed, but in vain. And your letter tells me that "personal prayer is not for you," that you are giving up.

I beg you to reconsider and reflect again before renouncing. This time of daily prayer seems intolerable to you. Does this not come from a secret refusal to accept to see yourself as destitute, powerless and poor, if only for half an hour a day? If, with personal prayer scarcely begun, you are rushing to get back to your professional activity, is this not because you cannot wait to prove to others, and primarily to yourself, that you are a 'capable' man, a creative and efficient man? Be careful. I fear that you will give in to an insidious and dangerous temptation, that runs the risk of making you tip over into the group of those men that Christ cursed: the rich. The rich, in fact, are the men who *can*, who *have* and who *are*.

How necessary personal prayer is for you! In your current life dominated by success, it gives you the opportunity to discover your limits, to experience poverty of the truest and the most beneficial kind, that of the soul. Bless it for making you rediscover your childhood, that time when you couldn't do much, did not possess much, when you were dependent on others and were small and weak. In the kingdom of God, we are never more than a destitute and poor child.

Father Henri Caffarel
Present before God, One Hundred Letters of Prayer,
Letter 26

IN THE SERVICE OF THE POOR

If we bear so much love to the poor, it is because in them we find Jesus today, He who is the Word made flesh. The closer we are united to God, the more our love grows for the poor and the more our availability to serve them from the bottom of our heart. The joining of hearts has so many consequences.

Do not go looking for God in faraway countries. He is right next to you. He is with you. Keep your lamps alight and you will discover him incessantly. Watch and pray and you will see his Love and you will see the gentleness of the Lord you love...

In order to offer a home to a homeless Christ, we must start by making our houses places where peace, happiness and charity abound, thanks to our love for each of the members of our family or of our community. Once we have learnt to love with a love, which goes as far as hurting, our eyes will be opened and we will be able to give this love. Let us therefore have a

heart full of love, joy and peace and let us emit this love, joy and peace by becoming more and more like Christ.

Let us remember that whatever we do for others, offering them a smile, or a piece of bread or tenderness or a helping hand, Jesus considers that all that has been done to him: "You did it to me." But there was neither pride nor vanity in our work. The work is God's and the poor are God's. Let us place ourselves completely under Jesus' influence so that it is his thoughts that fill our spirit. Let us accomplish his work with our hands and we will be all-powerful with the one who strengthens us.

Let us be completely convinced that what we do represents only a drop in the ocean. But if that drop were not there, the ocean would be diminished by as much.

What is important is each person. In order to be able to love them, we need to be in contact with them. I believe in the one-on-one relationship. For me, every person is Christ and since there is only one Jesus, the person with whom I am with at such and such a moment is therefore the only person in the world.

Thanks to my prayer, I become one in the love with Christ and I realize that to pray to him is to love him, which means accomplishing his words. The poor in the slums of the world are like the suffering Christ. In them, the Son of God lives and dies and through them, God shows me his true face. For me, prayer means living 24/7 in conformity with Jesus' will. Living for him, through him, with him.

And then, one day, we will meet up with Christ in heaven. Our Lord will show his recognition by saying to us, "Come! Come to me, you blessed of my Father, for I was hungry and you gave me food; I was naked and you clothed me; I was a stranger and you took me in."

Make us worthy, Lord, to serve others throughout the world: those who live and die in poverty and hunger. On this day give them, through our hands, their daily bread and through our compassionate love, give them joy and peace.

***Mother Teresa & Brother Roger
Prayer: Seeking the Heart of God, 1992.***

THANK YOU ARMELLE

We would like to particularly thank Armelle, who has ended her service, for the time she dedicated over the past several years to the secretarial duties of our Intercessors' family. May the Lord be with her in her new activities.

GENERAL INTENTION

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Source of all Love,
We bring before You our long-suffering or happy families, with their beauty and their injuries.
Teach us to take care of each other in our families.
May the spouses look out for each other,
May the parents take care of the children and
May the children in time become the guardians of their parents.

Intercessors' quarterly letter n°150

Amen!