

GOSPEL*Matthew 5:1-12*

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

'How happy are the poor in spirit:
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy the gentle:
they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn:
they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and
thirst for what is right:
they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful:
they shall have mercy shown them.

Happy the pure in heart:
they shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers:
they shall be called sons of God.

Happy those who are persecuted
in the cause of right:
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.'

HOMILY OF ST JOHN PAUL II*1 February 1987 (Excerpt, Translated)*

The Christian vocation—the vocation in Jesus Christ—finds its particular expression in the teaching of the eight Beatitudes, which we heard in the Gospel. With these words, Jesus Christ shows us what God "chooses," what he "values," where he finds his "pleasure," and who are those he calls "blessed." Indeed, he calls them so because this divine election opens up for them a new horizon of existence. The Beatitudes mark a comparison and a boundary between the world, which rests on its selfishness, its vainglory, its earthly perspective, and the Kingdom of God, in which the believer is called to an existence that God has drawn to himself and enriched with his life and his grace. Blessed are those who, as poor, afflicted, hungry for justice, merciful, pure of heart, peacemakers, and persecuted for justice's sake, have

been invited to follow Jesus Christ, to be his imitators, faithfully embracing the witness of the cross for the suffering inflicted upon them by the world. They have demonstrated that they have accepted their calling, modeled on Christ, and have testified to their desire to generously and gratefully offer their suffering lives to God; and God tells them that he has accepted their gift: "Blessed."

This program of God's pleasure, this true scale of values according to God, finds its concrete expression precisely in the Sermon on the Mount, and through the eight Beatitudes. And the Christian is called to conform to it from baptism, that is, from his origin, as a rule of life, in such a way as to bear witness to the world to the miraculous transformation wrought in him by grace and faith. The program of the Beatitudes has created in the believer a gift that is fulfilled "in the spirit," that is, wherever a relationship with God takes place. Discovering himself as a beloved child of the heavenly Father, the Christian is enabled to respond to Christ's call, which awakens in him an ever-higher moral commitment, up to the supreme beatitude, that which enlightens every disciple of Christ to understand how to live in his own flesh the destiny of the Master, "persecuted for righteousness' sake."

The ideal of the Beatitudes, in fact, finds its most perfect incarnation in the life of Jesus Christ. He is the model of every Beatitude, because he presented himself to us as poor, meek, suffering, thirsting and hungry for justice, pure of heart, a peacemaker, persecuted and crucified. He is the concrete witness of the Beatitudes, the perfect model of each of them. In the figure of Jesus, every Christian must consider his own vocation, committing himself to following the example of the Son of God. "Consider your vocation" therefore means: look at Christ through the prism of the eight Beatitudes. He who seeks to draw close to this living "example," to the one who became a model for us, fulfills the Christian vocation. The Beatitudes thus reveal their true meaning only in the light of Christ: "He has become our wisdom" (1 Cor 1:30).

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Each person, then, should commit himself to embodying the message in a way that corresponds to his or her own state of life. The Lord has called us on various paths. Some have dedicated themselves to God through total consecration in the priesthood or religious life; others have been called to live in the lay state, in the sacrament of marriage, in professional activity, or in service to their brothers and sisters. The paths are diverse, and the ways to follow them are manifold, but the fundamental orientation of the Christian vocation is one and common: Jesus, Son of God, foundation of the Beatitudes, giver of hope, the one who inspires and sustains our lives until the full realisation of the work of grace.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: How do the Beatitudes challenge the world's idea of happiness, and what does that reveal about the kind of life God truly blesses?



Heart: When have you experienced a kind of deep peace or joy that came not from comfort or success, but from trusting God through difficulty or sacrifice?



Hands: What is one Beatitude you feel called to live out more intentionally this week, and how could you express it in a concrete action or attitude?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.