

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 POPE ST JOHN PAUL II

(Translated from Italian, Excerpt)

28 January 1996

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

These words, which we read in the Sermon on the Mount, according to the version of the Evangelist Matthew, in a certain sense constitute the guiding thought of the whole Liturgy today. Christ says: “Blessed are the poor in spirit”. We hear the same in the refrain of the responsorial psalm: “Blessed are the poor in spirit”. A similar concept is expressed in the first reading, taken from the Book of the Prophet Zephaniah: it praises “a humble and poor people” who “trust in the name of the Lord” (cf. *Zep 3:12*).

Who are the poor in spirit? It is not primarily a question of material poverty. According to Holy Scripture, poverty in spirit concerns those who *live*

in a supernatural perspective: they live in the world, working and trying to earn their daily bread, but at the same time they are aware that all good comes from God. Even the temporal good, produced by the sweat of their brow, is a gift of God. Poor in spirit are those who *do not attribute to themselves what they are or what they possess*. They recognize, in fact, that they have received everything from the hands of God, usually through the contribution of others. They do not boast, therefore, but praise the Lord for the good they are able to achieve in life, *and in this way they live in the truth* .. It could be said that poor in spirit are precisely those who live in the truth and through it become capable of receiving ever greater goods.

Jesus assures that the poor in spirit possess the Kingdom of Heaven. Indeed, the inner attitude of poverty represents a secure access to possession of the Kingdom of heaven. In a certain sense *it creates in man the interior space* necessary to become a participant in the life and happiness of God.

2. Dear brothers and sisters! Just over a month has passed since the Christmas holidays. The birth of Jesus, as well as his whole life, offer a significant confirmation of this beatitude. Christ came into the poor world, lived in poverty and died on the cross stripped of everything. *In this beatitude Christ expresses himself*. And at the same time he turns to us because we imitate him, accepting the same order of values in our life and *living in his own perspective* of him.

The poor in spirit are *a particular object of divine election*. In this sense, as we read in the second reading, St. Paul writes to the Corinthians today: “God has chosen what is foolish in the world to confuse the wise, God has chosen what is weak in the world to confound the strong, God has chosen this. who in the world is ignoble and despised and what is nothing to reduce the things that are to nothing, so that no man can boast before God “(*1 Cor 1: 27-29*). The poet Adam Mickiewicz asks: “What am I in front of your face?”, And he answers: “Dust and nothing”.

Poverty in spirit indicates, according to the Gospel, almost *a typical space that man opens to divine action* , allowing him to unfold his saving power. The

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Responsorial Psalm proclaims it: «The Lord gives sight to the blind, / the Lord raises up those who have fallen, / the Lord loves the righteous, / the Lord protects the stranger. / He supports the orphan and the widow (...) / . He is faithful forever, / does justice to the oppressed, / gives bread to the hungry. / The Lord frees the prisoners (Ps 145 [146], 8-9 . 6-7).

The Kingdom of God takes place in various ways: when man opens the interior space of his soul to

him, *when he is not full of himself*, but opens himself to Fullness with an attitude of humility, so that God himself is praised in him. *Then man lives by the truth of the Redemption*, as we read in the Letter of St. Paul: “And it is through him that you are in Christ Jesus, who by the work of God has become for us wisdom, justice, sanctification and redemption” (*1 Cor 1:30*).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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



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



Heart: What lies at the heart of being happy for you? Are you striving for happiness based on the road map that Jesus gives in this Gospel?



Hands: Humility is at the heart of so much of what Pope Francis is advocating. How can you better embrace humility in your life, overcoming pride and self-reliance?

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 (e.g. “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’.