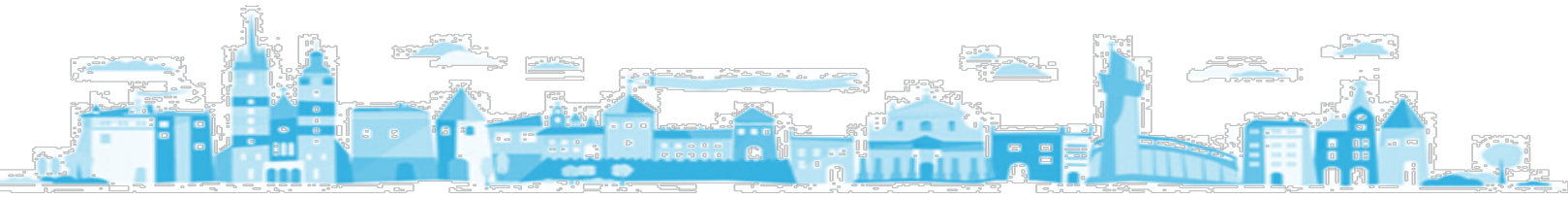


YOUTH COORDINATION



*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.*

Matthew 5, 3-11

THE BEATITUDES

We are at the core of the Gospel. If we want to summarize Christ's message, the gist of all the Christian message, in short, in a few words, we could repeat the Beatitudes. Christianity is the radiation of this core, the explosion of this "nucleus".

I would like to try not to cover the subject but at least to introduce it by putting four questions.

1. For whom are the Beatitudes?

The passage from the Gospel of Matthew opens with the words "seeing the crowds..." (5:1) and the preceding chapter closes with this statement "Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him." (4:25).

The above territories cover a wide geographic area which crosses Israel's narrow ethnic-religious strip and leads to pagan cities and peoples. Seen in a new light: it is the wide human geography that Matthew gathers round Jesus to receive from Him the gift and the challenges of the Beatitudes.

Therefore, the proposal is not made to a selective few, it is not made to a few heroes: it is an invitation to the whole Church, to every Christian.

The Beatitudes look at and speak to poor people like us, people from all conditions of life. They do not concern only *the selected few*, the saints, but also *common men* like me. Then, we too are on the Mount of the Beatitudes; and so those words are put into our hands and on our hearts, so that we may be able to assimilate them and propose them to other people as they are.

They have their feet on the ground and have heaven in their heart!

2. But where has Jesus learnt the Beatitudes?

Definitely, they bring together so many passages from the first alliance, especially Israel's prophetic message and spiritual experience. But they are not findings from these contributions, they are not a series of addenda. The Beatitudes are "more than this". The Beatitudes come from "above".

Jesus heard them in the heart of the Blessed Trinity; he read them in God's heart!

They tell us that God is poor, is meek, is merciful, is pure, is a peacemaker, and carries the weight of our suffering.

Before telling us what we should do and how we should be, the Beatitudes speak to us about God, who He is, how He is: they are the exegesis of God's heart.

If the Father is so, then so should His children be: Jesus, the Son, is thus the first person of the Beatitudes, the living Beatitudes, and we, children in His image, children in the Son, are called to be persons of the Beatitudes: fragments of the Beatitudes, seeds of joy which inhabit the world, which live through the ages. Like flames: glittering flames in the night!

3. What do the Beatitudes say?

They cover three periods: the present, the future and the past.

The present looks people, who suffer, struggle, groan or are in dismay, in the face: they are history's and life's crucifixes. They are the thousand faces of suffering. They are those from whom we instinctively escape and guard ourselves.

The future is the promise, the commitment which God personally makes in their regard: He will change their situation, He will wipe their every tear, He will make their deserts flower: their life, which presently moans, will turn into a dance.

It is the Kingdom, the gift of the Kingdom which already is amongst them within their fatigue and their lament. It is there, like a grain of wheat in the earth's grooves which are the wounds of the earth. Therefore, full happiness and fullness of life are not attained through craftiness,

power and the idolatry of “things”, but through the Cross, that is through loving, giving and serving, choices inspired by the logic of life, the logic of Jesus.

The past: the warranty, basis and motivation behind this change in situations lies in the past, in what happened in past human history which has changed the order of things. It is Jesus Himself, His death and Resurrection. He is the presence of the Kingdom amongst us and which is advancing towards its fulfilment. He is the reliability of the Gospel as a way of life.

The day of His Resurrection is the prophecy of the last day towards which we are journeying, it is the tacit but tenacious light, which enlightens us day after day, even during the most painful and grey ones.

4. How do we announce the Beatitudes?

The answer is short but vast: it is becoming ourselves persons of the Beatitudes. We: individuals, families, parishes, CA associations, Church. And this means feeling and experiencing the person of Jesus and His Gospel as something precious, as a treasure, as the greatest gift that we have come across in our lives.

But it also means being close to those who are materially and spiritually poor, to those who suffer, by assuming a fraternal and welcoming approach with our whole heart and through our deeds: by showing them that mercy which God never tires of showing us.

We have to move from words to deeds, from the Beatitudes which are just words to the Beatitudes as a way of life.

In this way, the Beatitudes are a door, a threshold which we pass through to proceed towards God - and this is Faith -, the threshold we cross to go out towards our brethren - and this is Love.

Mons. Mansueto Bianchi
Ecclesiastic assistant of FIAC, biblicist



I always like to link the Gospel Beatitudes with Matthew 25, where Jesus presents us with the works of mercy and tells us that we will be judged on them.

I ask you, then, to rediscover the corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, assist the sick, visit the imprisoned and bury the dead.

Nor should we overlook the spiritual works of mercy: to counsel the doubtful, teach the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the sorrowful, forgive offences, patiently bear with troublesome people and pray to God for the living and the dead. As you can see, mercy does not just imply being a “good person” nor is it mere sentimentality. It is the measure of our authenticity as disciples of Jesus, and of our credibility as Christians in today’s world.

If you want me to be very specific, I would suggest that for the first seven months of 2016 you choose a corporal and a spiritual work of mercy to practice each month. Find inspiration in the prayer of Saint Faustina, a humble apostle of Divine Mercy in our times:

“Help me, O Lord,

...that my eyes may be merciful, so that I will never be suspicious or judge by appearances, but always look for what is beautiful in my neighbours’ souls and be of help to them;

... that my ears may be merciful, so that I will be attentive to my neighbours’ needs, and not indifferent to their pains and complaints;

... that my tongue may be merciful, so that I will never speak badly of others, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all;

... that my hands may be merciful and full of good deeds;

... that my feet may be merciful, so that I will hasten to help my neighbour, despite my own fatigue and weariness;

... that my heart may be merciful, so that I myself will share in all the sufferings of my neighbour” (Diary, 163).

Pope Francis for WYD Krakow 2016

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