



*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

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

FOR THEY SHALL BE SATISFIED

There is a key-term, so to say an entrance door, which we should go through, in order to understand the fourth Beatitude well: “righteousness” This word has a particular importance in the Sermon on the Mount because Jesus makes a fundamental difference which distinguishes the disciple from the Pharisees and it is a basic condition to enter the Kingdom: “ I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:20), and more “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given you besides” (Mt 6:33).

But which “righteousness” is He speaking about?

Instinctively we think of the legal aspect, of economic dealings, of social relations. Definitely, in a certain sense, Christ’s expression does not exclude these dimensions but goes further and deeper. The “righteousness” which he speaks about is the recognition, the acceptance, the realization of God’s project, of His will full of love and closeness towards people and their lives.

It is therefore not a detached, cold and enigmatic will, much less a hostile, punitive or aggressive one.

“Righteousness” welcomes, serves, promotes people’s and world events. It is that project which is full of love, longing and unlimited passion with which the Father loves each of His children and calls him to that fullness of happiness and joy and gives him to others, to the Church and to the world as a unique and precious brother.

“Righteousness” is that desire for the salvation of every wounded, lost and distressed man, for whom Jesus was driven to embrace the cross, so that we may not remain helpless and desperate on the crosses which life presents and which we sometimes bring about for one another.

Being hungry and thirsty for righteousness then means trying to find that “righteousness” of God with all our strength. It is longing for His love, His project for us, with that same enthusiasm and determination with which we guard our life, realizing that without this “righteousness” life itself remains dull, cold and crushed under “a sky of bronze”, more similar and near to death itself.

Being hungry and thirsty for righteousness means basing every effort and commitment for the promotion of human dignity on the solid and reliable foundation, that is on God’s will and project. You are “hungry and thirsty for righteousness when you know that God supports you in your struggles and fatigue and shares in your fervour so that each and every man may experience the joy of living and enjoy the dignity of having a name and of being significant and esteemed. The “righteousness” of God enkindles in you a passion for man, entrusts you with history and leaves every day in your hands.

It is up to you, together with your travelling companions, with your brethren, to start spelling out an answer to this, every moment of each day and in every detail of your life. May the Lord guide you to find this reply within you and to look to the future until one day He Himself brings it to completion by helping you reach the fullness of that Kingdom towards which, with Jesus, we have started journeying in this life.

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MEN OF THE EIGHT BEATITUDES

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati



This question which the young man in the Gospel asks may seem far from the concerns of many young people today. As my Predecessor observed, “Are we not the generation whose horizon of existence is completely filled by the world and temporal progress? (Letter to Young People, No. 5). Yet, the question of “eternal life” returns at certain painful moments of our lives, as when we suffer the loss of someone close to us or experience failure.

But what is the “eternal life” to which the rich young man is referring? Jesus describes it to us when he says to his disciples: “But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you” (Jn 16: 22). These words point to an exciting possibility of unending happiness, to the joy of being surrounded by God’s love for ever.

Wondering about the definitive future awaiting each of us gives full meaning to our existence. It directs our life plan towards horizons that are not limited and fleeting, but broad and deep, and which motivate us to love this world which God loves so deeply, to devote ourselves to its development with the freedom and joy born of faith and hope. Against these horizons we do not see earthly reality as absolute, and we sense that God is preparing a greater future for us. In this way we can say with Saint Augustine: “Let us long for our home on high, let us pine for our home in heaven, let us feel that we are strangers here” (Tractates on the Gospel of Saint John, Homily 35:9). His gaze fixed on eternal life, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, who died in 1925 at the age of 24, could say: “I want to live and not simply exist!” On a photograph taken while mountain-climbing, he wrote to a friend: “To the heights”, referring not only to Christian perfection but also to eternal life.

Dear young friends, I urge you to keep this perspective in developing your life plan: we are called to eternity. God created us to be with him, for ever. This will help you to make meaningful decisions and live a beautiful life.



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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