



*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 THE PURE OF HEART FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD

There are two words which we should consider carefully so as not to lose and spoil the beauty of this Beatitude: “heart” and “pure”.

The heart, as understood in the Bible, is the source of a person’s life: it is that profoundness, that root from where man’s thoughts, feelings, decisions and actions stem; it is here that man’s relations with God and with others originate. The heart is our life’s centre of synthesis and unifying point: the origin, from where life is channelled into the different parts.

“Pure”, in the Bible, is that which pertains to the sphere of God, that which corresponds to Him, which resembles Him, which reflects Him. Purity makes a person worthy to stand before God, to receive Him, to experience the Alliance, reciprocity.

Very soon in the Bible, the revelation links the two terms together and refers to the heart as the place and the seat of purity (Cf. *Psalms* 15; 24; 73; *Is* 33:14-16; *Jr* 24:7; *Ez* 18:5-9; etc.).

Matthew, the Evangelist, treats the theme in two passages: in 15:1-20 where Jesus says that a person’s purity does not depend on what he touches or eats but on his heart, on his intentions,

on the centre of gravity of his life. The second text is 23:21-39, in the polemic with the Pharisees, where the point emerges that for Jesus, true purity is that which is interior, loyal, where truth is loved and lived, and is transparent. This is precisely purity of the heart.

Therefore, the "pure of heart" is not to be understood (as affirmed from the XIX century onwards) with predominant reference to chastity or to the right use of sexuality but in a wider and more profound sense. It concerns the whole human person and includes one's intentions and the true and willing openness to the Lord and to one's brethren.

The opposite of the "pure of heart" is not only he who is won over by his impulses and by his sexual instincts (which are not ruled and purified by the demanding logic of love) but is the hypocrite, the one who is double-faced, who bases more on appearances than on the being, the one who gives more importance to the skin than to the heart. The hypocrite is more preoccupied about himself as a figure than as a person. The person is a face, the figure is a mask; the person is an identity and is thus truth, transparency, it is the heart which reveals itself; the figure is an appearance and thus it is a shop-window, it is a distortion, it weakens and obscures the heart.

This hypocrisy becomes even more dramatic in the life of a Christian, because it reduces the centre of the evangelic message, that is the "heart", to a cover which hides and protects an idolatrous life. This is what the great Bishop of Antioch, Ignatius, wrote to the Christian Community when he was awaiting his martyrdom: "it is better to be a Christian without saying it that say that you are a Christian without being one"!

Thus the pure heart refers to the "new heart" announced by the prophets, that is, it is the source within a person, the centre of his life, which is renewed by the gift and the strength of the Holy Spirit.

According to the Gospel, the "pure of heart" whom Jesus calls "blessed" are the simple, the lowly, the children: "if you do not become as little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven". The pure of heart are the disciples, with their desire and commitment to follow Jesus. "For they shall see God". The effect of this Beatitude opens out in two directions. Purity, clearness of heart, makes it possible for us to see "beyond" the heart itself, and the "beyond" of the heart is God. A person with a pure heart is an open window on God! Through his person, his words and his deeds, one catches a glimpse of the Lord's face, of His closeness to our life. It is what people notice, at times even in an intuitive manner, when they come across a saint: with or without a halo. The pure heart is a transparent heart, like a window's clean glass pane, through which you see further than your room, you see the outside, you see the sky!

But “seeing God” is also life’s landing stage, the goal of the Christian journey (cf. 1Co 13:10ss; 1Jn 3:2ss; Apoc. 22:4ss): it is the fullness of communion, it is the marriage encounter.

When the author of the *Apocalypse* wanted to describe heaven’s Jerusalem, the city which, with fatigue and courage, we daily try to reach, he says that it is “like a crystal” (21:18). It is a city where transparency, purity, brightness prevail; it is the city where God is unveiled, where God can be seen. He is Himself a gift of a fraternal and warm reciprocity, He lacks nothing and there is nothing obscure about Him. It is towards this “crystal city” that we try to advance today, while we let the Holy Spirit purify our “heart”.

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MEN OF THE EIGHT BEATITUDES

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati



What does it mean to be “blessed” (*makarioi* in Greek)? To be blessed means to be happy. Tell me: Do you really want to be happy? In an age when we are constantly being enticed by vain and empty illusions of happiness, we risk settling for less and “thinking small” when it comes to the meaning of life. Think big instead! Open your hearts! As Blessed Piergiorgio Frassati once said, “To live without faith, to have no heritage to uphold, to fail to struggle constantly to defend the truth: this is not living. It is scraping by. We should never just scrape by, but really live” (*Letter to I. Bonini*, 27 February 1925). In his homily on the day of Piergiorgio Frassati’s beatification (20 May 1990), John Paul II called him “a man of the Beatitudes” (AAS 82 [1990], 1518).

If you are really open to the deepest aspirations of your hearts, you will realize that you possess an unquenchable thirst for happiness, and this will allow you to expose and reject the “low cost” offers and approaches all around you. When we look only for success, pleasure and possessions, and we turn these into idols, we may well have moments of exhilaration, an illusory sense of satisfaction, but ultimately we become enslaved, never satisfied, always looking for more. It is a tragic thing to see a young person who “has everything”, but is weary and weak.

Saint John, writing to young people, told them: “You are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one” (1 Jn 2:14). Young people who choose Christ *are* strong: they are fed by his word and they do not need to ‘stuff themselves’ with other things! Have the courage to swim against the tide. Have the courage to be truly happy! Say no to an ephemeral, superficial and throwaway culture, a culture that assumes that you are incapable of taking on responsibility and facing the great challenges of life!

MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS FOR THE TWENTY-NINTH WORLD YOUTH DAY 2014



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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