



*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 PEACEMAKERS FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD**

These are not the peace-loving people nor the “pacifists” nor the “pacificators: the “peacemakers” referred to in the Beatitudes are an originality, a uniqueness of the Gospel. They can share long stretches of their journey with others but they come from farther away and go even farther.

For the Bible, peace is not a simple category which is single-coloured: it is polychromed, it is a symphony. Peace means having good relations with God, with others, with yourself, with the world; peace is benediction, it is salvation. Peace is happiness, it is the flourishing of human nature! It even has a social dimension: it is justice, freedom, dignity, it is the defence of the weak, the welcoming of strangers, the reconciliation with enemies. Biblical peace is a “world”, it opens out like a horizon, it is so vast and beautiful that only God can give it. And God gives “Shalom” through his Messiah (cf. *Psalm 72; Is 11:19; 91:11*), through Jesus. He is the peace between us (*Ep 2:14*)! He gives “His” peace, a peace quite different from that the world gives. (*Jn 14:27*).

If we want to understand the “peace” which Jesus speaks about, we have to learn it from Him, we have to receive it from Him.

Paul writes to the Christians of Ephesus that Jesus has brought peace about, “through the cross, in His own person He destroyed all hostility”(2:16).

Therefore, peace is the fruit of the cross: not of any cross, but of “His” Cross: of God’s cross! It is not the death of another innocent person which has changed history, nor is it another victim who “broken down the barrier” and generated “the new man” (2:14s). It is God’s death in His Son’s humanity, it is a death which gathers and embraces all deaths: the source of all sins, namely, the bitter streams of divisions, bullying, indifference, racial, religious and classist hatred. All death’s wide and desolate domain, in all its epochal forms and in its daily trifles, was reversed in Christ’s death and was overcome in His Resurrection. Thus Easter’s new, strong, and serene gift is “peace be with you!” (Jn 20:19-26).

In the time of Jesus, the “*pax romana*” prevailed and the Emperor Augustus had dedicated an altar (*ara pacis augustae*) to it. But that peace was the fruit of the “imperium”, of power, of Rome’s military dominion. It was a peace of prevalence, of abuse of power.

Christian peace is the fruit of the Cross: these are obviously quite opposite! For this reason, only those who are born to a new life are able to attain this “peace”. and the peacemakers, in its originality and in its full dimension, are only “the new men” who are risen with Christ. This does not exempt us from sharing this mission with the many fellow travellers, men and women of “good will”, pilgrims of peace like us. Rather it demands from us a greater effort.

The term used by Jesus “peacemakers” demands that we do not start with theories, thoughts or abstract theology but to dirty our hands: it urges us to put our hands in history’s dough, be it great or small, whether it concerns centuries of history or just daily occurrences, so as to follow and continually untangle the red thread of peace. We have to be realistic, tenacious, intelligent and trust the Lord to open the way for us and for all those with whom we share our journey.

But the peace that stems from the Cross makes us fully aware that peace, whose source is Love and whose fruit is Charity, can only be attained at a price: through fatigue and suffering, just like Jesus. The way towards peace is not a carpet of roses. Fighting hatred, divisions, indifference means fighting Evil. M.L. King wrote: “Evil is, by its very nature, persistent and rebellious, and never easily frees its prey without first offering quite a fanatical resistance. We should contest it continually by opposing it tenaciously using the strong weapon of Righteousness”. This is the way which the last Beatitude indicates to us.

“Because they shall be called the children of God”: this is how Jesus concludes this seventh Beatitude.

The expression “to be called” is a Jewish expression which means “becoming, being, becoming known as”.

Precisely, this is why the biblical “*shalom*” is a “world” of good which comes down to us from the Father and takes root in men’s hearts and in the furrows of human history through the logic

of the Cross. We could say that, with their life, with the humble and courageous tenacity of their actions and of their personal choices, “peacemakers” reflect the face of God down here. Just as He is revealed in the Cross of Jesus: a face full of mercy towards those who have distanced themselves, towards sinners, a face which fights the evil which traps and devastates, a face of tenderness towards the poor and the helpless.

The verb in the future tells us who “peacemakers are” so as to make us aware and understand the passing of time up to the final stage: they are the prophets of the future, the minstrels of hope. The Jewish tradition says that “peacemakers are the sons of the world to come” (*Sifrà* no. 6:26)

Thus, peacemakers help the earth not to forget heaven.

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### *MEN OF THE EIGHT BEATITUDES*

#### Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati



I think of the example of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. He said, “Jesus pays me a visit every morning in Holy Communion, and I return the visit in the meagre way I know how, visiting the poor”. Pier Giorgio was a young man who understood what it means to have a merciful heart that responds to those most in need. He gave them far more than material goods.

He gave himself by giving his time, his words and his capacity to listen. He served the poor very quietly and unassumingly. He truly did what the Gospel tells us: “When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret” (*Mt* 6:3-4). Imagine that, on the day before his death when he was gravely ill, he was giving directions on how his friends in need should be helped. At his funeral, his family and friends were stunned by the presence of so many poor people unknown to them. They had been befriended and helped by the young Pier Giorgio.



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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