

Blessed are the Clean of heart

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God (Mt 5:8).

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδία, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

Clean of Heart (καθαροὶ τῆ καρδία):

The Greek word for “clean” is *katharos* (καθαρός). It signifies that which is clean, or free from contaminating substance.

The term is used literally of the “clean” cloth in which Jesus’ body was wrapped after his death (Mt. 27:59).

In the gospel accounts the word is employed in a *ceremonial sense* of the purification from leprosy (Mt 8:3); the release of certain individuals from “unclean spirits (Lk 8:29) etc. “Pure” may describe the heart that is free of *unadulterated “motives;”* the *ideal state of mind* of the person who longs to serve God and others for the sheer unselfish joy of honoring the Creator, and thus free of base motives.

Being pure in heart involves having a *singleness of heart* toward God. A pure heart has no hypocrisy, no guile, no hidden motives. The pure heart is marked by *transparency* and an *uncompromising desire* to please God in all things. It is more than an external purity of behavior; it is an internal purity of soul.

This beatitude denotes the *moral blamelessness* of the inner life, the center of which is the heart. That purity is in the heart, the seat of thought, desire, motive, not in the outward act. Ceremonial purity is not sufficient. Jesus requires, and teaches, the virtue of the heart. Purity of heart includes both *chastity and freedom from the other defilements of sin*.

The pure may be the spotless or faultless in general; the continent with special reference to sexual indulgence—those whose very thoughts are clean; or the pure in motive, the single-minded, the men who seek the kingdom with undivided heart.

“Pure in heart” refers to those who have attuned their *intellects* and *wills* to the demands of God's holiness, chiefly in three areas: *charity; chastity* or sexual rectitude; *love of truth* and *orthodoxy of faith*. There is a connection between purity of heart, of body, and of faith.

They will see God (τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται):

“See” is the Greek *horao* (ὄραω). The future tense of *horao* is *hopsontai* (ὄψονται). The word may be used literally (Mk. 12:15) or figuratively. When figuratively employed, it denotes “to perceive, recognize, experience, etc.”

“Seeing God” is *not* the Oriental idea of good fortune in being an intimate friend of the kings (1 Kg 10:8); (Est 1:14), nor as an inward seeing of God; nor direct spiritual fellowship with God here on earth and there in heaven; but of the seeing God who gloriously reveals Himself in his kingdom, a seeing which will be attained in the condition of the glorified body.

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This vision might not be possible in the present life (Ex 33:20); (Job 19:26, 27); (Is 6:5); yet spiritually it was known to be the privilege of the saints even here (Gen 5:24; 6:9; 17:1; 48:15); (Ps 27:4; 36:9; 63:2); (Is 38:3, 11).

A clear knowledge of God is promised even now, but in words which will be more literally fulfilled in life eternal (1 Jn 3:2-3; 3:6) concerning the opposite to purity (1 Th 4:5). Seeing God does not mean the 'beatific vision' as we would understand it today. Rather it means to dwell in God's presence. Jesus said the angels of the just ones 'constantly behold my heavenly Father's face' (Mt 18:10). Seeing God's face depends on a purity of heart that represents total commitment to God's plan.

Pastoral Application:

According to the Catechism of the Catholic church, the object, the intention, and the circumstances make up the "sources," or constitutive elements, of the morality of human acts.

- The term "passions" refers to the affections or the feelings.
- The most fundamental passion is love, aroused by the attraction of the good.
- Love causes a desire for the absent good and the hope of obtaining it; this movement finds completion in the pleasure and joy of the good possessed.
- The apprehension of evil causes hatred, aversion, and fear of the impending evil; this movement ends in sadness at some present evil, or in the anger that resists it.
- In the passions, as movements of the sensitive appetite, there is neither moral good nor evil. But insofar as they engage reason and will, there is moral good or evil in them.
- Emotions and feelings can be taken up in the virtues or perverted by the vices.
- The perfection of the moral good consists in man's being moved to the good not only by his will but also by his "heart."

Jesus says, "From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder" (Mk 7:21). Reflect on the following:

Killing vs anger (Mt 5:21-22)

Adultery vs lust. (Mt 5:27-28)

Purity of heart will enable us to see God: it enables us even now to see things according to God. Purification of the heart demands prayer, the practice of chastity, purity of intention and of vision.