

# FAITH AND REASON

**A Journey of Purification:** Today, let us read together the sixth Beatitude which promises the vision of God and has purity of heart as a condition. There is a Psalm that reads: “my heart says to thee, ‘Thy face, Lord, do I seek.’ Hide not thy face from me”. This language manifests the thirst for a personal relationship with God, not a mechanical one, not a somewhat vague one, no: personal, which the Book of Job also expresses as a sign of a sincere relationship. The Book of Job reads: “I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see thee”. And often I think that this is the journey of life, in our relationship with God. We know God from hearsay, but with our experience, we go forward, forward, forward, and in the end, we come to know him directly, if we are faithful ... And this is the maturity of the Spirit.

How do we reach this intimacy, to know God with our eyes? We can think of the disciples at Emmaus, for example, who have the Lord beside them but “their eyes were kept from recognizing him”. The Lord will open their eyes at the end of a journey that culminates with the breaking of bread and had begun with a scolding: “O Foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken”. This is the reprimand at the beginning. It is the root of their blindness: their hearts were foolish and slow. And when the heart is foolish and slow, things cannot be seen. Things appear foggy. Herein lies the wisdom of this Beatitude: in order to contemplate it, we need to enter within ourselves and make room for God because, as Saint Augustine says, God is “more inward than my innermost self”. In order to see God, there is neither the need to change eyeglasses or vantage point, nor to change the theological authors who teach the path: we need to free the heart from its deception. This is the only path.

This is a decisive maturity: when we realize that our worst enemy is often hidden within our heart. The most noble battle is the one against the inner deception that creates our sins. Because sins change our inner vision, they change our evaluation of things. They make us see things that are not real or at least not that real.

It is thus important to understand what purity of heart is. In order to do so, we should remember that, for the Bible, the heart does not consist only in feelings, but rather it is a human being’s most intimate place, the inner space where people are themselves. This is according to the Bible.

The Gospel of Matthew itself says “if our eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness”. This light is the gaze of the heart, the perspective, synthesis, and the point from which reality can be seen. But what does having a “pure” heart mean? A pure heart lives in the presence of the Lord, preserving in the heart what is worthy of the relationship with him. Only in this way can one possess an intimate life that is “unified, linear and unwinding. A purified heart is, therefore, the result of a process that implies liberation and renunciation. Those who are pure of heart are not born that way but rather they have experienced an inner simplification, learning to renounce the evil within oneself, which the Bible calls circumcision of the heart.

This inner purification implies recognition of the part of the heart that is under the influence of evil “You know Father, I feel this way, I think this way, I see this way, and this is bad”: recognizing the bad part, the part that is clouded by evil in order to learn the art of always allowing ourselves to be trained and guided by the Holy Spirit. The journey from a sick heart, from a sinful heart, from a heart that cannot see things well because it is in sin, to the fullness of the light of the heart, is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who guides us to take this journey. Through this journey of the heart, we can achieve “seeing God”.

In this beatific vision, there is an eschatological dimension of the future, as with all Beatitudes: it is the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven towards which we are directed. But there is also the other dimension: to see God means understanding the design of Providence in what happens to us, to recognize his presence in the Sacraments, his presence in our brothers and sisters, especially the poor and the suffering, and to recognize God there where he manifests himself.

This Beatitude is somewhat the fruit of the preceding ones: if we have listened to the thirst for good that dwells within us and we are aware of living of mercy, a journey of freedom begins which lasts an entire lifetime and leads us to Heaven. It is serious work, work that is carried out by the Holy Spirit if we give him the room to do it, if we are open to the action of the Holy Spirit. This is why we can say that it is mostly the work of God in us — in the trials and the purifications of life — and this is the work of God and of the Holy Spirit who brings great joy, true and profound peace. Let us not be afraid, let us open the doors of our heart to the Holy Spirit so that he may purify us and lead us forward in this journey towards full joy.

## Stations of the Cross

- Sunday** The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death.  
**Monday** The Second Station: Jesus is made to carry the cross.  
**Tuesday** The Third Station: Jesus falls the first time.  
**Wednesday** The Fourth Station: Jesus meets his Blessed Mother.  
**Thursday** The Fifth Station: Simon helps Jesus carry his cross.  
**Friday** The Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.  
**Saturday** **The Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time.**

**The First Station:** Reflection: Jesus stands before Pilate, accused of crimes he hasn't committed, and He Who is Without Sin mutely accepts the blame for the sin of all. Trust allows for this, Jesus' full trust in God's plan—the promise of resurrection and salvation. This was the light that led him through the darkness.

**The Second Station:** Reflection: Scholars generally agree that Jesus carried the horizontal beam of the cross, which weighed about 125 pounds. We can only imagine the pain he endured as he walked, the beam chafing his flesh torn back. Steadfast acceptance of God's will allow him to put one foot in front of the other.

**The Third Station:** Reflection: At the time of Jesus' death, crucifixion was the punishment reserved for the lowest of society's low, the prevailing method employed to publicly dishonor a person. Jesus' brutal flogging was part of the practice and, as it sent his body into shock from pain and blood loss, the likely cause of his fall. Consider Christ's humility, then: "God Made Flesh" succumbed to the ultimate display of human denigration and assumed the physical vulnerabilities of the human body.

**The Fourth Station:** Reflection: Face to face, Jesus and the Blessed Mother meet. Jesus is covered in blood, sweat, and spit, bent under the weight of the cross, subjected to angry shouts of hate. And Mary, experiencing every mother's worst nightmare that her child will suffer harm, feels the sword pierce her soul. Moving with fiercely protective love, she offers her son the little she can: the comfort of her presence.

**The Fifth Station:** Reflection: Simon from Cyrene is pressed into service "on his way in from the country"; it's an unexpected detour from his plan for the day. Scripture doesn't tell us why he is appointed for the task or how he reacts. The point, it seems, is simply what he does. He serves a man in the hour of his greatest need. Here we remember that, as with Simon, our acts of service expected or not, appointed or not, eagerly shared, or not—carry great weight in the kingdom of God.

**The Sixth Station:** Reflection: As Jesus stumbles down the road to Golgotha, Veronica takes her veil to gently wipe the sweat and blood from his face. In return, Jesus leaves the imprint of his image on the cloth. "He who receives me receives the one who sent me." Jesus meets her kindness with kindness, blessing her with the imprinted veil, a lasting reminder of God with us.

**The Seventh Station:** Reflection: Earlier in the Gospels, we see images of Jesus as the center of attention: some ascended trees to see him; others reached out simply to touch his garments; still others dismantled a roof to lower their sick friend down to Jesus. Jesus had once been surrounded with love and acclaim; now he is rejected and scorned. Prayer: Jesus, give us the grace to identify with those who are rejected. Inspire in us compassion for the student who is cast aside and the colleague who is marginalized. May our love of you become a force that heals and unifies.

*Stations of the Cross are prayed every Friday at 6:30 pm in San Sebastian Catholic Church. Outside Stations of the Cross are also available for your individual prayers.*

In His Will is Our Peace  
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