

FAITH AND REASON

The logic of the Beatitudes changes the world: Today the word of God speaks to us of wisdom, witness and promises. Wisdom in these lands has been cultivated since ancient times. Indeed, the search for wisdom has always attracted men and women. Often, however, those with more means can acquire more knowledge and have greater opportunities, while those who have less are sidelined. Such inequality – which has increased in our time – is unacceptable.

The Book of Wisdom surprises us by reversing this perspective. It tells us that “the lowliest may be pardoned in mercy, but the mighty will be mightily tested”. In the eyes of the world, those with less are discarded, while those with more are privileged. Not so for God: the more powerful are subjected to rigorous scrutiny, while the least are God’s privileged ones Jesus, who is Wisdom in person, completes this reversal in the Gospel, and he does so with his very first sermon, with the Beatitudes. The reversal is total: the poor, those who mourn, the persecuted are all called blessed.

How is this possible? For the world, it is the rich, the powerful and the famous who are blessed! It is those with wealth and means who count! But not for God: It is no longer the rich that are great, but the poor in spirit; not those who can impose their will on others, but those who are gentle with all. Not those acclaimed by the crowds, but those who show mercy to their brother and sisters. At this point, we may wonder: if I live as Jesus asks, what do I gain? Don’t I risk letting others lord it over me? Is Jesus’ invitation worthwhile, or a lost cause? That invitation is not worthless, but wise Jesus’ invitation is wise because love, which is the heart of the Beatitudes, even if it seems weak in the world’s eyes, in fact always triumphs. On the cross, it proved stronger than sin, in the tomb, it vanquished death.

That same love made the martyrs victorious in their trials – and how many martyrs have there been in the last century, more even than in the past! Love is our strength, the source of strength for those of our brothers and sisters who here too have suffered prejudice and indignities, mistreatment and persecutions for the name of Jesus. Yet while the power, the glory and the vanity of the world pass away, love remains. As the Apostle Paul told us: “Love never ends”. To live a life shaped by the Beatitudes, then, is to make passing things eternal, to bring heaven to earth.

But how do we practice the Beatitudes? They do not ask us to do extraordinary things, feats beyond our abilities. They ask for daily witness. The blessed are those who live meekly, who show mercy wherever they happen to be, who are pure of heart wherever they live. To be blessed, we do not need to become occasional heroes, but to become witnesses day after day. Witness is the way to embody the wisdom of Jesus.

That is how the world is changed: not by power and might, but by the Beatitudes. For that is what Jesus did: he lived to the end what he said from the beginning. Everything depends on bearing witness to the love of Jesus, that same charity which Saint Paul magnificently describes in today’s second reading. Let us see how he presents it.

First, Paul says that “love is patient”. We were not expecting this adjective. Love seems synonymous with goodness, generosity and good works, yet Paul says that charity is above all patient. The Bible speaks first and foremost of God’s patience. Throughout history, men and women proved constantly unfaithful to the covenant with God, falling into the same old sins.

Yet instead of growing weary and walking away, the Lord always remained faithful, forgave and began anew. This patience to begin anew each time is the first quality of love, because love is not irritable, but always starts over again. Love does not grow weary and despondent, but always presses ahead. It does not get discouraged but stays creative. Faced with evil, it does not give up or surrender.

Those who love do not close in on themselves when things go wrong, but respond to evil with good, mindful of the triumphant wisdom of the cross. God’s witnesses are like that: not passive or fatalistic, at the mercy of happenings, feelings or immediate events. Instead, they are constantly hopeful, because grounded in the love that “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”.

We can ask ourselves: how do we react to situations that are not right? In the face of adversity, there are always two temptations. The first is flight: we can run away, turn our backs, trying to keep aloof from it all. The second is to react with anger, with a show of force. Such was the case of the disciples in Gethsemane: in their bewilderment, many fled, and Peter took up the sword. Yet neither flight nor the sword achieved anything. Jesus, on the other hand, changed history.

How? With the humble power of love, with his patient witness. This is what we are called to do; and this is how God fulfils his promises. Promises. The wisdom of Jesus, embodied in the Beatitudes, calls for witness and offers the reward contained in the divine promises. For each Beatitude is immediately followed by a promise: those who practice them will possess the kingdom of heaven, they will be comforted, they will be satisfied, they will see God. God’s promises guarantee unrivalled joy and never disappoint...**Pope Francis celebrates Mass at St. Joseph Chaldean Catholic Cathedral in Baghdad March 6, 2021.**

Eternal, Holy God, I come to You burdened with worries, fears, doubts and troubles. Calm and quiet me with peace of mind. Empty me of the anxiety that disturbs me, of the concerns that weary my spirit, and weight heavy on my heart. Loosen my grip on the disappointments and grievances I hold on to so tightly. Release me from the pain of past hurts, of present anger and tension, of future fears. Sometimes it's too much for me Lord, too many demands and problems, too much sadness, suffering, and stress. Renew me spiritually and emotionally. Give me new strength, hope, and confidence. Prepare me to meet the constant struggles of daily life with a deeper faith and trust in You. Let your love set me free, for peace, for joy, for grace, for life, for others, forever.

Alive to God in Christ: If you believe that Christ has risen from the dead, you must believe also that you yourselves have likewise risen with him.....and if you believe yourselves dead with Christ, you must believe that you will also live with him; and if you believe that Christ is dead to sin and lives to God, you too must be dead to sin and alive to God.... **Origen**

A Blessing: God give you joy this day. That bides you along Life's way. God give you peace this day that cannot pass away God give you love this day, to remain with you always.

The Good Man: The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good. The evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil.
Luke 6:45

A Thought For the Day

Sunday Jesus wants to live his life in you, to look through your eyes, love with your heart.
Monday Cultivate forbearance and pray for a short memory as to all unkindnesses.
Tuesday There is a foolish corner even in the brain of the wise man.
Wednesday Faithfulness is the sister of justice.
Thursday The sense of the word "enthusiasm" among the Greeks signifies "God in us".
Friday Many have yet to discover the power in a resolute determination.
Saturday The prayer that begins with trust and is willing to wait, will always end in thankfulness.

The Center of Life: The center of life is neither in thought, nor in feeling, nor in will, or even in consciousness, so far as it thinks, feels or wishes. For moral truth may have been penetrated and possessed in all these ways and escape us. Deeper even that consciousness there is our being itself, our very substance, and our nature. Only those truths which have entered into this last region, which have become ourselves, become spontaneous and involuntary, instinctive and unconscious, are really our life - that is to say, something more than our property.... So long as we are able to distinguish any space whatever between the truth and us, we remain outside it...

Henri Frederic Amiel

Do not neglect your children's religious education. I urge you to continue with the same zeal for spiritual teaching that you have shown here in the assembly. Do not display such enthusiasm here only, but also when you are at home. Talk over these matters with your husband, wife, and family. Make comments yourselves and let other family members respond. In this way everyone will contribute and profit. Do not tell me that children should not be occupied with religious matters. They should not only be occupied but eager to focus on them.

Of these seven days each week, you should, you should dedicate one at the Lord of us all. After all we do not think it unreasonable to expect our domestic help to work for us all the time. So shouldn't we ourselves apportion to our Master at least of our leisure time for God? This is the case especially when we consider that all our service is of no profit to him since he needs nothing. In fact, our service to him turns out to our own advantage.

Why is it that, if you are expected to have your children spend more time for the sake of spiritual gain, you call the matter a waste of time? And can you escape angering God if you find time for their leisure, and find ways to justify everything they do, you think it troublesome and unreasonable for your children to take in hand matters concerning him? Do not do that, brothers and sisters; do not do it. It is at this very age when children need most of all to hear these things. In their simplicity they readily store up in their hearts these things. What they hear is expressed on their minds like a seal of wax. Besides, it is now that their life begins to incline towards vice or virtue... **St John Chrysostom**

In His Will is Our Peace
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