## The Beatitudes: A Blueprint for Spiritual Excellence

At our daily Mass last Monday, we were blessed to have the Gospel from Matthew 5: 1-12 where Jesus gives us the Beatitudes.

They are quite beautiful but admittedly I've found them a little "philosophical," but when you dig into them, they show us how we take the faith to the next level. Something good to think about in this long stretch of Ordinary Time.

So how can we think about them?

**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** What this gets at is pride; pride that says I matter most, it's about me, my ego. The paradox is the more we give our lives away, the happier we become. Think about the love you show for your loved ones and family - the sacrifice is tough, but it leads you to a better place.

**Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.** Pretty odd at first - is it a good thing to be sad? Rather the meaning here is when we are sorrowful for our sins. Culture might say do what you want, but we should have a sorrow over our sins; a sense of wanting to repent, of looking at our lives and saying what's going right and wrong, and saying Lord I am sorry for this and sin causes me sorrow, but I want to do better.

**Blessed are the meek or lowly for they will inherit the land.** The meaning here is that those who empty themselves or forget about themselves are the most grounded or closest to reality; they aren't preoccupied with ego or power but lose themselves in whatever they do.

**Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.** We humans hunger for lots of things; money, power; material stuff. Nothing wrong with having stuff of even power, but none of these things will fully satisfy. The one thing that will satisfy us though is friendship with God. How happy we are when we want to grow closer to God above all things through prayer and introspection, listening to God and doing his will.

**Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.** Remember to love others is to will their good; mercy means forgiveness, but it also means showing empathy. It means suffering with others; it means helping them. We pray this beatitude and say Lord help my eyes to be open and see those in need. Help me to see situations where I can help; maybe a loved one going through something tough, or someone who needs forgiveness. We live this out through how sacrifices of love for one another.

**Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.** If you want to be a saint, your life is centered around one thing - God. God is your anchor. How easy it is to be torn by different drives and wishes; sometimes as we know there's sinful tendencies we have. We look at them and with God work to overcome temptation. Or we are divided into

pursuing other wishes that maybe aren't sinful, but deep down we know that we are called to something greater. Or we love God but become just too busy to be with God because we are focused on this and that. When God is our center though, we make better choices and find true happiness.

**Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called children of God**. How much peace do we make during the day? For Eugene was talking to students and trying to help them. Maybe we forgive someone who needs forgiving. Maybe we show patience on the road or with people in our lives. Maybe we refrain from gossip or tearing someone down with words or by clicking "send." Maybe we turn the other cheek. Peace isn't just avoiding being cruel; it's doing something to help bring about peace.

And last, **blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness**. Doing the right thing isn't easy; as I said last week, be it talking about the faith or a concern with a loved one, or speaking up about faith and morals in a world that seems to move further away from God and become increasingly secular and "do whatever you want," we will be hated at times for the Gospel. But as Bishop Robert Barron puts it, if you are never criticized you aren't in a good spiritual space. False prophets in the Bible are loved by leaders because everyone loves a "yes man" or the message that "you are great." Well, we are great - loved by God - but we are also sinners and flawed. So who does God want us to challenge? How does God want us to catechize and help others learn what the faith is truly about?

The 10 Commandments are great in helping us to think about our actions, but the Beatitudes really help us take our faith to the next level as we evangelize the world as people of faith, hope and love.

Have a blessed week,

Fr. Paul