

## February

### **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God (Mt. 5:8)**

Jesus begins his preaching with the Sermon on the Mount. On a broad low hill, a few hundred yards from the Tiberias lakeside, near Capernaum, Jesus sits down, as was customary for teachers, and proclaims to the crowds what it means for a human person to be blessed. The word for beatitude, 'blessed', had been heard throughout the Old Testament. It spoke of the exaltation of the one who, in the widest variety of ways, fulfilled the Word of the Lord.

The beatitudes of Jesus were in part an echo of the ones his disciples already knew. For the first time, however, they were hearing that the pure of heart were not only worthy of going up the mountain of the Lord, as sung in the Psalm (Ps 24:3-4), but they could even see God. What sublime purity was this that could merit so much? Jesus would explain it several times during the course of his preaching. Let us try to follow him then so as to draw from the fount of authentic purity.

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First of all, Jesus says that there is one supreme means of purification: “You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you” (Jn. 15:3). His word, more than the practice of religious rituals, purifies a person's inner self. The word of Jesus is not like human words. Christ is present in his word, as he is present, albeit in a different way, in the Eucharist. Through his word Christ enters within us and, provided we allow him to act, he makes us free from sin and, therefore, pure of heart.

Thus purity is the fruit of living the word, all the words of Jesus, which free us from the so-called attachments which, inevitably, we fall into if our heart is not in God and in his teachings. These could be attachments to things, people, ourselves. But if our heart is focused on God alone, all the rest falls away.

To achieve this, it can be useful to repeat throughout the day to Jesus, to God, the invocation of a psalm which says, “You, Lord, are my only good” (Ps 16:2). Let us try to repeat it often, especially when various attachments seek to pull our hearts toward images, sentiments and passions that can blur the vision of what is good and take away our freedom.

Are we inclined to look at certain advertising posters or to watch certain television programs? Let's stop and say to Jesus, “You, Lord, are my only good”, for re-declaring our love for God will be the first step toward going out of ourselves and by so doing we grow in purity.

Do we sometimes feel that a person or an activity is coming between us and God, like an obstacle that blocks our relationship with Him? Then it's time to repeat, “You, Lord, are my only good.” This will help us to purify our intentions and regain inner freedom.

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Living the Word makes us free and pure, because it is love. It is love, with its divine fire, that purifies our intentions and the whole of our inner self, because our ‘heart’, according to the Bible, is the deepest seat of our intelligence and our will.

But there is one kind of love that especially enables us to live this beatitude and that Jesus commands us to practice. It is mutual love, being ready to give our life for others, following the example of Jesus. This love creates a current, an exchange, an atmosphere characterized above all by transparency and purity, because of the presence of God who alone can create a pure heart in us (see Ps. 50:12). It is by living mutual love that the Word acts with its purifying and sanctifying effects. As isolated individuals we are incapable of resisting at length the solicitations of the world. Instead mutual love provides a healthy environment capable of protecting the whole of our authentic Christian existence and, in particular, our purity.

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So, then, the fruit of this constantly re-acquired purity is that we can ‘see’ God, which means we can understand his work in our lives and in history, hear his voice in our hearts, and recognize him where he is: in the poor, in the Eucharist, in his Word, in our communion with others, in the Church.

It is a foretaste of the presence of God which already begins in this life, as we ‘walk by faith, not by sight’ (2 Cor. 5:7), until the time when, ‘we will see face to face’ (1 Cor. 13:12) forever.

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