



Daily Reflections

January 29, 2017

Scripture

Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him.

He began to teach them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you
and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.
Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward will be great in heaven."

Our Scripture Reflection

Today's Gospel text contains one of the most familiar and famous teachings of Jesus, the Beatitudes. To appreciate them, we must first grasp the meaning of the first or "gateway" Beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." What does Our Lord mean by "poor in spirit"? Anyone who has hit the rock bottom of life can understand these words. The poor in spirit are those who have been humbled, who have tried life their way, struggled or failed and have realized that they are completely dependent on God and His way. In a society that prides itself on independence and power, this teaching will sound foreign if not uncomfortable. However, you can't comprehend the other Beatitudes until you have come to terms with this foundational teaching. Pray that Jesus will guide you to His way which IS the way of humility.

Food for your Journey

Psychiatrist and student of Freud, James Tucker Fisher, closed his books *Few Buttons Missing* with this "revealing" discovery:

"I dreamed of writing a handbook that would be simple, practical, easy to understand and easy to follow. It would tell people how to live - what thoughts and attitudes and philosophies to cultivate and what pitfalls to avoid, in seeking mental health. I attended every symposium ... possible, ... and took notes on the wise words of teachers and my colleagues who were leaders in the field.

"And then quite by accident, I discovered that such a work had already been completed If you were to take the sum total of all the authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists

on the subject of mental hygiene - if you were to combine them and refine them and cleave out the excess verbiage ... you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount. And it would suffer immeasurably through a comparison."

--Fisher and Lowell S. Hawley, *A Few Buttons Missing: The Case Book of a Psychiatrist* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1951), 273.

"When Mother Teresa first began her work among the dying on the streets of Calcutta, India, she was obstructed at every turn by government officials and orthodox Hindus, who were suspicious of her motives and used their authority to harass her and to frustrate her efforts. She and her fellow sisters were insulted and threatened with physical violence. One day a shower of stones and bricks rained down on the women as they tried to bring the dying to their humble shelter. Eventually Mother Teresa dropped to her knees before the mob. 'Kill me!' she cried in Bengali, her arms outstretched in a gesture of crucifixion, 'And I'll be in heaven all the sooner.' The rabble withdrew but soon the harassment increased with even more irrational acts of violence and louder demands were made of officials to expel the foreign nun in her white sari, wearing a cross around the neck.

"One morning, Mother Teresa noticed a gathering of people outside the nearby Kali Temple, one of the holy places for Hindus in Calcutta. As she drew closer, she saw a man stretched out on the street with turned-up eyes and a face drained of blood. A triple braid denoted that he was of the Brahmin caste, not of the temple priests. No one dared to touch him, for people recognized he was dying from cholera.

"Mother Teresa went to him, bent down, took the body of the Brahmin priest in her arms and carried him to her shelter. Day and night she nursed him, and eventually he recovered. Over and over again he would say to the people, 'For 30 years I have worshipped a Kali of stone. But I have met in this gentle woman a real Kali, a Kali of flesh and blood.' Never again were stones thrown at Mother Teresa and the other sisters."

--Donald J. Shelby, "Weakness and Power," 22 December 1991, Santa Monica, California.

Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like Your heart.
May I desire nothing more than to live as You lived. Amen.