

BEATITUDES

The Beatitudes of Jesus also called Sermon on the Mount. They are the essence of the teachings of Christ. Jesus, preached (Beatitudes), experienced it on Mount Tabor (transfigured) lived and died on Calvary (Crucifixion).

There have been many events in the Catholic Church where the spirit of the beatitudes was at stake. The saints and holy people have given a real challenge to the beatitudes through their life. In a parish, there was a dispute between the poor and a rich man. The rich man had through unjust means acquired the property of the poor. The rich man comes to the Pastor and says “father here is a donation to the parish or for your personal use. Please do not come in between us. The Pastor threw that money at the face of the rich man and said ‘until justice is done, I cannot have this money from you’. The rich man left the office never to return.

The beatitudes are the real essence of Christianity. Apart from beatitudes, there would not be Christianity at all, one who literally puts into practice the Beatitudes will draw upon himself the wrath of the world. Therefore the sermon on the Mount cannot be separated from Mount Calvary.

The main crux of the Beatitudes is happiness that is being Blessed. He called his followers to be happy. But

the means chosen by our Lord is quite opposite to that of the world.

Of course, there are certain maxims of the world. Anyone challenges these maxims, such as, "you only live once", "get as much out of life as you can", "who will ever know about it?", "what is sex for if not for pleasure?" is bound to become unpopular.

Through the Beatitudes, Our Lord turns upside down the philosophy of the world. The normal philosophy of the world makes man proclaim: *Security, Revenge, Laughter, Popularity, Getting even, Sex, Armed might, Comfort.*

To those who say "you cannot be happy unless you are rich"; our Lord says "blessed are the poor in spirit". To those who say "Don't let him get away with it"; our Lord says "Blessed are the patient". To those who say "Laugh and the world laugh with you"; the Lord says "Blessed are those who mourn". To those who say "if nature gave you sex instincts you out to give them free expression otherwise you will become frustrated"; our Lord says "Blessed are the clean of heart". To those who say "Seek to be popular and well known"; He says "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and speak all manner of evil against you falsely because of me". To those who say "In a time of peace prepare for war"; he says "Blessed are the peacemakers".

When he demanded the purity of heart, he insisted that it should be total. You have heard it said: Thou shall not commit adultery. But I say to you “he who casts his eye on a woman so as to lust after he has already committed adultery with her in his heart”.

Our Lord went into the soul, and laid hold of a thought and branded even the desire for sin as a sin. He does not wait for the evil tree to bear evil fruit. He would prevent even the sowing of the evil seed in the human heart.

Jesus strongly affirmed that evil in man comes from within. Sins, selfishness, greed, adultery, crime, theft, bribery, political corruption, for that matter even religious corruption all these came from the man himself. The offenses came from our will and not from our glands. (As the modern psychologists would defend man saying all these evils come from environment and political situation). We cannot blame the sin within us on our ancestors. We need to blame ourselves.

He said “If your right eye is your undoing, tear it out and fling it away; it is better for you to lose one part of your body than for the whole of your body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it away, it is better for you to lose one part of your body than for the whole of it to go to hell” (Mt 5:29-30).

It is normal for a man to let his leg cut off or his arm severed to save the body from gangrene or poisoning.

But here Our Lord transferred circumcision of the flesh to circumcision of the heart.

There is more to learn from Christ. He said “you have heard it said, eye for an eye, tooth for tooth..... But I tell you “Do not set yourself against the man who wrongs you. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn and offer him your left. If a man wants to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. If a man in authority makes you go one mile, go with him two”.

Turn the other cheek? Our Lord perfectly knew “hate will multiply like a seed”. If a man propagates hate and violence, and he asks the one to slap, it will envelop the whole group. Perhaps the group will find itself dead. The only way to put a stop to it is to turn the other cheek.

“The Christian law is the innocent will suffer for the guilty”

Yes in this age the church has suffered much. In Pakistan, Algeria, Rwanda, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, India etc. The church has been bearing witness everywhere through peaceful means. But we need to implement it in our own environment. Do we try to imitate the teaching of Christ? Do we retaliate? When our Lord said “Blessed are the poor in spirit”, the World proclaims “Blessed are those who are rich”. Rich survive. Poor are crushed. Economic reform even at the cost of manslaughter is perpetrated. Economic reforms at the cost of ecological exploitation have become the norm of life. Economic reform and ambition for comfortable living at the cost of unborn babies have been spreading

rapidly everywhere. Millions of them are killed daily. Babies crying. Poor suffering. They need to pay taxes because rich want to become richer. But the Lord says blessed are you poor in spirit. Share, he says, what you have, and be content with what you have.

To those who do not want to change their lives and want to follow the world Jesus has the four woes which are terrible;

“But alas for you who are rich; you have had your time of happiness. Alas for you who are well-fed now; you shall go hungry. Alas for you who laugh now; you shall mourn and weep. Alas for you when all speak well of you; just so did their fathers treat the false prophets” (Luke 6:24-26).”

Beatitudes help us to be grafted into Christ.

It is rooted in Christ – it is assimilation into Christ as St. Paul puts it is a never-ending assimilation to Christ: The life of St. Paul was a constant challenge. He risked his life for Christ. “For me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). Paul describes this vital assimilation to Christ and the sharing of Christ’s life with neologisms like: “co-death” and “co-life” with Christ (II Tim 2:11).

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