

12. June 2023

## Poor before God

Mt 5:1-12

*Seeing the crowds, Jesus went onto the mountain. And when he was seated his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them: How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs. Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance. Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them. Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognised as children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs. 'Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.*

Poverty in spirit... What does this mean?

We men like to aspire to riches and want to "be somebody in life". Not infrequently we find ourselves under performance pressure, because we want to prove our worth, either to ourselves or to others.

Perhaps this can be related to the fact that we believe that this is the only way we are worth something. In an extreme case, we may end up feeling worthless when we fall ill or grow old. To the extent that today's society is losing faith, it runs the risk of valuing the individual on the basis of his or her usefulness. Thus, disabled children, for example, have less and less chance to live, or are even prevented from being born.

When one has appropriated this "performance attitude", one can also project it onto one's relationship with God. However, we do not have to appear rich before Him, we do not have to show Him what we are worth; we are simply loved, just as parents normally love their children from the moment of conception.

But "poverty of spirit" also encompasses other aspects, which are related to what we have said so far. God loves empty hands, it is sometimes said. These "empty hands" mean that we expect everything from Him, that we can come before Him in simplicity, aware of our limitations, also on the spiritual level.

How deep can be true repentance when we realise that we are inclined to evil and that we do evil! How disappointed we can be in ourselves, when we have built on our own strength and then suffer defeats, when we lose everything we thought we had in our hands, when an illness weakens us and suddenly everything changes in our life!

It is when we turn to God in these circumstances, broken inside, either by our bodily or moral misery, or even both, and confidently lay it before Him, that we are "poor in spirit". And it is then that God can infuse us with His grace and we are simply receptive to His love.

But this attitude of openness and receptivity should not be limited to those moments when we experience our misery, which makes us feel weak and needy before God, and toombs that false self-confidence and pride.

Rather, we can make poverty of spirit the basic and constant attitude of our life, always ready to present ourselves poor before God, not looking at our own merits or building on them a false self-esteem, but always knowing that we are blessed and loved. This attitude does not claim one's own rights in the first instance, but considers the life and all that one receives as an undeserved and gratuitous token of love from God the Father. When the soul discovers something good in itself, it thanks God; when it discovers something bad, it lays it at His feet and asks Him for help.

God's grace can easily be poured into this soul, and thus the Kingdom of God begins to be present in it: *"How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs"*. There, in Heaven, all the angels and saints live in communion, fully aware that they have received everything from Him. He who is "poor in spirit" joins in this certainty the communion of saints.

The soul that already in this world acquires a receptive attitude, lives in a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, because it is already united to God and His own by grace. And

this reality will be consummated after its death, when it will live forever in the light of God.