

## 6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR C

(Jeremiah 17:5-8; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20; Luke 6:17, 20-26)

(Excerpts from Pope Francis – *Angelus* 13 FEB 2022)

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16 February 2025

Brothers & sisters, contrary with Matthew's version with eight Beatitudes today's Gospel presents us Luke's version with four Beatitudes. It is interesting to note that despite being surrounded by a great crowd, Jesus, proclaims the Beatitudes by addressing "his disciples". Yes, he speaks only to the disciples. Indeed, the Beatitudes define the identity of the disciple of Jesus. They may sound strange, to those who are not disciples. If we ask what a disciple of Jesus is like, the answer is precisely the Beatitudes.

Let us take a look at the first one which is the basis for all the other ones: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God". *Blessed are you poor*. Jesus says two things of his disciples: that they are blessed and that they are poor. In what sense? In the sense that Jesus' disciples do not find their joy in money, power, or other material goods; but in the gifts they receive every day from God: life, creation, brothers and sisters, and so on.

These are gifts of life. They are content to share even the goods they possess, because they live according to the logic of God. And what is the logic of God? Gratitude. The disciple has learned to live in gratitude. This poverty is also an attitude towards the meaning of life, because Jesus' disciples do not think they possess it, that they already know everything, but rather they know they must learn every day. And this is poverty: the awareness of having to learn every day. Because they have this attitude, Jesus' disciples are humble, open people, far from prejudice and rigidity. Is this true?

There was a good example in last Sunday's Gospel reading: Simon Peter, an expert fisherman, accepts Jesus' invitation to cast his nets at an unusual time, and then, filled with wonder at the miraculous catch, he leaves the boat and all his goods to follow the Lord. Peter shows himself to be humble by leaving everything, and in this way, he becomes a disciple. Instead, those who are too attached to their own ideas and their own securities, find it difficult to truly follow Jesus. They follow him a little, only in those things in which "I agree with him and he agrees with me", but then, as far as the rest is concerned, it goes no further. This is not a disciple. And so, they are dissatisfied.

Disciples, on the other hand, know how to question themselves, how to humbly seek God every day, and this allows them to plunge into reality, grasping its richness and complexity.

In other words, the disciple accepts *the paradox of the Beatitudes*: they declare that those who are poor, who lack many things and recognize this, are blessed. Humanly speaking, we are inclined to think in another way: happy are those who are rich, with many goods, who receive applauses and are the envy of many, who have all the certainties. But this is a worldly mindset, it is not the way of thinking of the Beatitudes! Jesus, on the contrary, declares worldly success to be a failure, since it is based on a selfishness that inflates and then leaves the heart empty.

Faced with *the paradox of the Beatitudes*, disciples allow themselves to be challenged, aware that it is not God who must enter into our mindset, but we into his. This requires a journey, sometimes demanding, but always accompanied by joy. Because the disciple of Jesus is joyful, with the joy that comes from Jesus. Let us remember, the first word Jesus says is: *blessed*, hence the name of the *Beatitudes*. This is the synonym of being disciples of Jesus. By freeing us from the slavery of self-centredness, the Lord breaks our closures, dissolves our hardness, and reveals us true happiness, which is often found where we do not expect it to be. It is he who guides our life, not us, with our preconceptions and our demands.

Disciples, in the end, are those who let themselves be led by Jesus, who open their heart to Jesus, who listen to him and follow his path. We might then ask ourselves: do I have the disciple's availability? Or do I behave with the rigidity of one who believes him or herself to be right, who has a clear conscience, who feels they have already arrived? Do I allow myself to be "shaken inside" by the paradox of the Beatitudes, or do I stay within the confines of my own ideas?

And then, with the logic of the Beatitudes, setting aside the hardships and difficulties, do I feel the joy of following Jesus? This is the decisive trait of the disciple: the joy of the heart. This is the touchstone for knowing if a person is a disciple: does he or she have joy in their heart? This is the question.

May this Eucharist help us live as open and joyful disciples.