

31st Sunday - All Saints

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."

MT 5:1-12A

The beatitudes. The astonishing opening of the first homily that God delivered to begin his ministry to us. This homily was preached on the mountain, in the open meadow, to a gathering of people who didn't quite know their preacher, and even less, his mission.

It is a homily that still reverberates like an echo through history and through mankind. It is a source of hope, of inspiration, of moral advice.

The first crowd listening to that homily had no idea that it was much more. Even now, this teaching presents itself to us with a surprising depth. The Word of God is speaking words that are very much His and that are very much Him; these words have power to reveal the world, far beyond our comprehension or imagination.

When we hear this opening homily of Jesus, we don't suspect that it is also the homily of the last days, when things that seem to exist only in hope and prophecy, only in expectation, become reality. A reality that is stronger than anything before. The reality of the kingdom of heaven revealed: when God's ways meet human ways.

God's reality will be finally introduced to this world on the cross of Jesus Christ. And this cross will be the final victory of God, and of God's love, in the lives of his faithful. The

homily that Jesus preaches on the mountain is the first step to that other mountain of crucifixion. It is also an eternal point of reference and an eternal source of strength.

In this moment we realize that the beatitudes preached on the mountain are like shining jewels, like unexpected treasure in a deep cave. A sudden appearance of light creates a sparkling avalanche of reflections in the seemingly endless heaps of treasure stones. These jewels are the saints of the Lord. The people whose faith and love were known only to their Creator and Redeemer are listed by their most treasured qualities. The people who lived in the light of God's love now, by a glimpse of faith, can be seen to our eyes at the end of their pilgrimage. This end that reveals them as precious diamonds shining in the fire of God's love.

The celebration of the All Saints is a liturgical glance behind the curtains of time and space into the great celebration of God where, one day, we will join "saints among the saints in the halls of heaven." We are allowed, by the generous power of God's hope, to penetrate the darkness of the broken world and see God's face, and celebrate His mercy with All Saints. This astonishing feast of the glory of God that is repeated every time in every Eucharist.

In this context, the beatitudes are a majestic reading of the great achievements of people who spend their lives in the service of the King of Heavens. And now he responds to their love with his astonishing gratitude and wants to mention every quality they have, every way in which their love was revealed.

Did Jesus see them when he preached on the mountain? I believe that somewhere in the depths of his divinity they already were in his heart, which is why this homily is truly the source of hope.