

What does it mean to be pure of heart?

“...for they will see God.”¹ To be pure is to will one thing: God. Purity of heart unites the mind, will, and body; the one who is pure of heart is an integral whole. Love of God is the goal of every thought, every word, and every action. Love of God is the driving force behind how every moment is spent. The love of the Trinity has fully captivated the one who is pure of heart. The one who is pure of heart does not have to wait until Heaven to see God; he or she sees Him in every moment, in every person, in vegetation and creatures, in silence and community, sorrows and joys.

A pure heart is the opposite of and remedy for a distracted heart- and aren't we all familiar with a distracted heart! When our heart is distracted, we become fixated on our own sin, losing sight of God's salvation. We cling to physical or emotional comfort instead of letting God be our Comforter. We obsess over ourselves, worrying about the future or holding too tightly to the past. We define others by their sin or annoyances instead of viewing them through the eyes of the Merciful Father. Perhaps most of all we are busy, and prayer becomes another thing on our to-do list instead of an encounter with a Person. We compartmentalize our faith instead of recognizing the Lord's presence at every moment. We sin with our words or thoughts or actions. When this happens, we must run to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and pray for the grace to be a people “after God's own heart.”²

How can I become pure of heart?

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answered him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.’” He replied and said to him, “Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, “You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.³

The rich young man spoke to Jesus yet went away sad. Fixated on his possessions, he was unable to see God right in front of him. He was unable to accept the invitation to new life because he was afraid of the sacrifice it required. Although he appeared to be righteous, his true heart was revealed in his unwillingness to love his neighbor, specifically the poor.

“The ascent to God occurs precisely in the descent of humble service, in the descent of love, for love is God's essence, and is thus the power that truly purifies man and enables him to perceive God and to see him.”⁴ Our heart is purified by service to others. To truly conform our hearts to Christ, we must follow Him with our whole hearts. If we desire the Resurrection, we must be willing to go to the Cross and the tomb first. In our suffering we must trust that the Resurrection is coming. Our trust and hope, the fruit of confident love, will propel us to desire God alone and follow wherever He leads, no matter what the cost.

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¹ Matthew 5:8

² 1 Samuel 13:14

³ Mark 10:17-22

⁴ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* p.95