

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

May 6, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

Devil's Beatitude

"The Prince of this world, Satan, doesn't want our holiness, he doesn't want us to follow Christ. Maybe some of you might say: 'But Father, how old fashioned you are to speak about the devil in the 21st century!' But look out because the devil is present! The devil is here... even in the 21st century! And we mustn't be naïve, right? We must learn from the Gospel how to fight against Satan."

For the month of May, I would like to take a deeper look at the "Devils Beatitudes". These twelve statements were given to me when I was a newly ordained priest. I do not know who the original author is but I have found them to be an excellent examination of conscience and there is something about them that seem to resonate with people when I use them in my homilies.

1. Blessed are those who are too tired, too busy, too distracted to spend an hour once a week with their fellow Christians - they are my best workers.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen shared this insight on the necessity of the Eucharist in his book called *Calvary and the Mass: If then Death was the supreme moment for which Christ lived, it was therefore the one thing He wished to have remembered. He did not ask that men should write down His Words into a Scripture; He did not ask that His kindness to the poor should be recorded in history; but He did ask that men remember his Death. And in order that its memory might not be any haphazard narrative on the part of men, He himself instituted the precise way it should be recalled.*

Intellectually, I am still a Catholic because of the Mass. On one level the Mass gives me the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the Real Presence of God (the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ). While I do not understand completely how this can be, my experience and the experience of others have taught me this to be true.

The Mass is also a mysterious teacher who teaches me in ways that I might not even notice as I spend time with God's family. When people do not go to Church they begin to isolate themselves from God and from others and this is what the devil wants.

2. Blessed are those Christians who wait to be asked and expect to be thanked - I can use them.

Let the same mind be in you that was[a] in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **(Philippians 2:5-11)**

The happiest and greatest Christians I know are the ones who don't wait to be asked. They are constantly looking for ways to help others and they seek out opportunities to learn more about their faith. Bishop Barron in his writings refers to the Christian Life as moving from the Pusillia (Small) Soul to the Magna (Great) Soul. When we are stuck in our small soul our world is small but as detach from ourselves we discover there is a larger world of people.

"Who among you would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'? Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'? Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'" (Luke 17:7-10)



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"We too need to guard the faith, guard it from darkness. Many times, however, it is a darkness under the guise of light. This is because the devil, as Saint Paul, says, disguises himself at times as an angel of light." – Pope Francis

Let us continue looking at the Devil's Beatitudes.

3. Blessed are the touchy who stop going to church - they are my missionaries.

Nine people can say I did a good job and one person can say I did a bad job. Most of us focus on the one bad review instead of the nine positive reviews. People who get upset could possibly be driving more people away from the Church than possible. I wonder if so many of our family don't come to Mass anymore because they hear so many of us complain about having to go to Church or the priest's homily, lack of bells, quality of music, etc. What if we all focused on one positive thing each week? Would our Church be filled again?

4. Blessed are the trouble makers - they shall be called my children.

I am all for jokes and I know that people can get carried away. What frustrates me is when people are unwilling to admit that maybe they have gone too far or when someone does not make sure that the person they were teasing in a friendly way is alright and has not taken the teasing too personally. When we cause trouble for the sake of entertainment, we are heading down a dangerous path.

5. Blessed are the complainers - I'm all ears to them.

"If you took one-tenth the energy you put into complaining and applied it to solving the problem, you'd be surprised by how well things can work out... Complaining does not work as a strategy. We all have finite time and energy. Any time we spend whining is unlikely to help us achieve our goals. And it won't make us happier." — Randy Pausch, The Last Lecture

Complaining is just trying to get others share in our misery.

6. Blessed are those who are bored with the minister's mannerisms and mistakes - for they get nothing out of his sermons.

One of my favorite sayings is "A broken clock is right twice a day". I like this quote because it reminds me of my need to listen to each person and judge his or her argument on its own merits. The truth is the truth no matter what that is why I like the following story about Abraham Lincoln:

There is a story about Abraham Lincoln who was arguing with a political opponent.

"How many legs does a cow have?" he asked his adversary.

"Four, of course," came the disgusted reply.

"That's right," agreed Lincoln. "Now suppose you call the cow's tail a leg; how many legs would the cow have?"

"Why, five, of course," was the confidant reply.

"Now, that's where you're wrong," said Lincoln. "Calling a cow's tail a leg doesn't make it a leg."



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May 20, 2018

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"It is enough to open a newspaper and we see that around us there is the presence of evil, the Devil is at work. But I would like to say in a loud voice 'God is stronger.' Do you believe this, that God is stronger?" – Pope Francis

Here are three more of the Devil's Beatitudes:

7. Blessed is the church member who expects to be invited to his own church - for he is a part of the problem instead of the solution.

Martin Niemöller (1892–1984) was a prominent Protestant pastor who emerged as an outspoken public foe of Adolf Hitler and spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps. Niemöller is perhaps best remembered for the quotation:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out— because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

We should never wait to be asked to do the good.

The following quote also comes in mind in the light of this Devil's beatitude: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."- Edmund Burke. Therefore the devil applauds our inaction.

8. Blessed are those who gossip - for they shall cause strife and divisions that please me.

St. John Vianney spoke out strongly against gossip because he knew that gossip could easily cause other sins. "Very often it requires only one immodest or unseemly word to start a thousand evil thoughts, a thousand shameful desires, perhaps even to cause a fall into an infinite number of sins and to bring innocent souls evil of which they had been happily ignorant."

Saint John of the Cross echoed idea "Joy in hearing useless things gives direct rise to distraction of the imagination, gossiping, envy, uncertain judgments, and wandering thoughts, from which flow many other pernicious kinds of harm."

9. Blessed are those who are easily offended - for they will soon get angry and quit.

This beatitude of the devil demonstrates the beauty and the wisdom of Mother Teresa.

"People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway. If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway. What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway. The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway. Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway. In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway."

Pope Francis said the following: "The church is not a museum of saints, but a hospital for sinners." In saying this he was modifying the famous St. Augustine quote: "The church is not a hotel for saints, but a hospital for sinners." This is a reminder that we are not going to find perfect people present in the Church on earth. Thank God for this though because if only the perfect were allowed in, we would not be included.



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

May 27, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

Devil's Beatitude

"Let us ask the Lord for the grace to take these things seriously. He came to fight for our salvation. He won against the devil! Please, let us not do business with the devil! He seeks to return home, to take possession of us... Do not relativize; be vigilant! And always with Jesus!" – Pope Francis

Here are the last three of the Devil's Beatitudes.

10. Blessed are those who do not give their offering to carry on God's work - for they are my helpers.

Ann Bird, a Methodist minister is famous for saying: "The last part of a person to be converted is their wallet."

Dr. Gottmann, a relationship expert, in many of his books about marriage states the fact that money is the number one cause of divorce. Surprisingly, he adds that this is the same for couples without money (poor) and for couples with a surplus of wealth. He draws the conclusion that the reason why money is the number one cause of divorce is because money has become a symbol for our dreams. Therefore when a person is withholding money from their Church they are also withholding their dreams for God. They like Adam and Eve are basically proclaiming through their actions that they do not trust in God to provide and take care of them.

11. Blessed is he who professes to love God but hates his brother and sister - for he shall be with me forever.

"If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen (1John 4:20)".

From the mystics of the Middle Ages comes the story of a young man who was granted by God a glimpse of both heaven and hell. God decided that it would be best if he showed the young man hell first and so God and the young man descended into the netherworld. The man saw a group of people gathered in a magnificent dining hall. The table was prepared with the finest food and the delicious smell of the food filled the room. And at first the young man thought God must have mistakenly taken him to heaven first instead of hell but as he studied the faces of the people in the room he began to see that each person was filled with anger, sadness and disappointment. It became quite clear to the young man that the source of their discomfort and distress was that all the forks and spoons in the room were too large for anyone to feed themselves with and so while they were able to smell and look at the mouth-watering food they were perpetually prevented from eating any of it.

In a flash God then transported the young man to heaven and much to the young man's surprise he found himself in a room that was almost identical to the room that he had seen in hell. The decorations were the same, the food was the same and there was even the same type of silverware which was too large for anyone to use.

The difference was not in the surroundings or even in the meal the difference between heaven and hell was in the hearts of the individuals there because the people in heaven instead of focusing on feeding themselves and thus being perpetually frustrated took the time to care and to feed the person next to them and thus everyone was able to be filled not only with the food but more importantly with love.

12. Blessed are you who, when you read this think it is about other people and not yourself - I've got you too!

Fr. Martin S.J. points out an important part of Christian life with his version of the serenity prayer:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, which is pretty much everyone, since I'm clearly not you, God. At least not the last time I checked. And while you're at it, God, please give me the courage to change what I need to change about myself, which is frankly a lot, since, once again, I'm not you, which means I'm not perfect. It's better for me to focus on changing myself than to worry about changing other people, who, as you'll no doubt remember me saying, I can't change anyway. Finally, give me the wisdom to just shut up whenever I think that I'm clearly smarter than everyone else in the room, that no one knows what they're talking about except me, or that I alone have all the answers. Basically, God, grant me the wisdom to remember that I'm not you. Amen

