

8. June 2020

“The Beatitudes”

Mt 5,1-12

Seeing the crowds, he 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.

After the intense meditation of the last weeks to honour the Holy Spirit and to get to know him a little better, we return to the daily reading of the Holy Scriptures. The light of the Holy Spirit is also necessary for this, so that we may receive much knowledge and blessing from the Word of God. I ask all those who follow our daily reflections to insert a prayer for us, so that this service of the Word may bear great fruit.

These rich words of the Sermon on the Mount - and each sentence deserves its own reflection - are for all times a standard by which we can orient our spiritual life. They are not only simple reflections which breathe a spiritual beauty in themselves and thus delight the mind and the heart, but they are also an invitation to realize them in our lives!

Today let us turn our attention to the last verses: *“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.”*

All the rejection and persecution suffered by those who follow the Lord must really take place because of him, if it is to bring a great reward. So, it is not a rejection

that we suffer perhaps because of our unpurified character or bad deeds, but because we belong to the Lord and His life is realized in us.

Why persecutions and rejections are coming?

Persecutions in the following of Christ is already evident in the first chapter of the Gospel of John.

"And light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it. The Word was the real light that gives light to everyone; he was coming into the world. He was in the world that had come into being through him, and the world did not recognise him. He came to his own and his own people did not accept him." (Jn 1,5.9-10)

It must be completely clear to us as believers that if we hold on to the truth of our faith it can lead to persecution. This might be differently intense in different countries of the world. The more consistently we hold on to the message of the gospel, the more the light of God shines in our lives. Even if the rejection, insult etc. is directed at our person, in a deeper sense the rejection of the light of God is happening. The light is not only rejected by the darkness, but if possible covered up, and it can easily even create an enmity against our person.

This is not an easy cross to bear, for we human beings normally like to live in peace and harmony with other people. We should do that as long as it is possible and right. However, we may also have to prepare ourselves for painful separations, if we are commanded to do so by faithfulness to God.

Love for a creature must never take the higher rank than love for God. This is true - as we know - right down to the innermost circles of family-relations.

"No one who prefers father or mother to me is worthy of me. No one who prefers son or daughter to me is worthy of me." (Mt 10,37)

The gospel doesn't fool us here. The words of the Lord must not be softened and adapted to our present sense of time. It is not the so-called "political correctness" that is our orientation, but the Word of the Lord, which remains:

"Sky and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Mt 24,35)

The Lord has made it clear to us that persecutions can come, and in a certain sense even inevitably follow, if people do not turn to the light. But Jesus has thus spoken a consolation and drawn attention to the heavenly reward. Those who remain

faithful to him and suffer persecution will demonstrate a special love to the Lord and become like him. This is the reason for the joy Jesus speaks about.

In these days in which the Spirit of the world is increasingly active in our Church and confuses many pastors and faithful, fidelity to the Lord, to his Word and to authentic doctrine is an important demonstration of our love for God.

We must also be ready to accept disadvantages for the sake of truth. Jesus did not promise us paradise on earth, but reward in heaven.

Let us remain faithful to our Catholic faith and recommend ourselves especially to the Virgin Mary, so that we may receive the Spirit of strength and not follow any aberrations from the faith. If we would suffer persecution for this reason, then we may apply to ourselves the word of the Lord:

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you."