

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 1, 2009

Homily of Anthony T. Padovano

Matthew 5:1-12a

The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes are revolutionary because they go against what we think are the attitudes that would give us an advantage in life.

Jesus tells us:

- 1. Blessed are the poor in spirit**
- 2. Blessed are those in sorrow**
- 3. Blessed are the gentle of heart**
- 4. Blessed are those who are restless, troubled for justice**
- 5. Blessed are those who forgive and have mercy**
- 6. Blessed are those who are authentic and pure in spirit**
- 7. Blessed are the peace-makers who turn from violence and reconcile people**
- 8. Blessed are the courageous who will not let harm to themselves or rejection by the crowds stop them**

These elements are revolutionary. We can see that if we compare them to what passes today as good advice or a preferred code of conduct for making our way in the world:

- 1. We are taught to pursue money and power rather than poverty**
- 2. To avoid sorrow and be carefree**

3. To be self-promoting rather than gentle
4. To let others find their way even when the odds are against them ; their problem need not be our problem.
5. To retaliate rather than to forgive when people push us around.
6. To be less transparent and authentic if it will make things easier for us or work to our advantage; to hedge our bets as we say
7. To retaliate against others when their behavior is unacceptable.
8. To become a winner at all costs, with no rejection and great public relations, with no loses but all gains

This is the code or cannon our culture asks us to accept as a key to success. Jesus turns it upside down. He says that to go in this direction is to guarantee a failed life.

He wants poverty of spirit, sorrow you choose on occasion, gentleness, ardent justice, forgiveness, authenticity, non-violence and courage. Jesus calls for a committed life and says there is no happiness without it. Is he right? Does it work? Should we want this?

Do the beatitudes work?

One way to evaluate this is by consulting our own experience and to think about the people we want around us.

I am astonished at how many successful people lead miserable, unhappy lives; at how many rich people are not content; at how many powerful people are not secure. We are taught that success and money and power will make us happy. Yet this formula fails regularly, generation after generation, century after century,

Let me make a profile of the person sketched by Jesus in the beatitudes. As I do so, ask yourself if you want to be like this, if you want your children to remember you like this, if you want your friends to be like this, if being like this sounds as if it will make you happy.

1. A life of no grasping, no greed; a simple life, uncluttered
2. A time of sadness and not forced joy when life breaks your heart and the hearts of those you encounter.

3. **A life of gentleness in which you are slow to anger and judgment**
4. **A life of involvement and concern for justice and fairness**
5. **A life of forgiveness and mercy without vengeance or retaliation**
6. **A life of honesty, authenticity, transparency in which people come to trust your word and trust you**
7. **A life of tranquility, turning from anger, violence, shouting**
8. **A life of courage when you are willing to pay the price of losing and of being rejected if it will make the world better for all of us, even if not for you at the moment.**

These are the beatitudes. Jesus says that if you act this way, you will have entered the kingdom of God with your heart. You will be comforted and find mercy and forgiveness and peace at every turn. You will inherit the earth with a life worth living. You will see God and be called a son or daughter of God.

Is this not where we all belong and all want to be?

If we think of it, why would we want our life to go any other way?

If we see this, then “blessed are we” indeed. The whole world is not worth the loss of our heart. We say in English that something truly valuable is priceless. No money can buy it. Happiness is priceless. Love is priceless. Hope is priceless. Friendship is priceless. God is priceless.

When we labor for such as world and such a church, we become blessed, priceless, irreplaceable.

