Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 5:1-12): When he 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. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit...”

Fr. Pablo CASAS Aljama
(Sevilla, Spain)

Today we read this Gospel so familiar to all of us, yet always so surprising. In this passage of the Beatitudes, Jesus offers us a way of life, a set of values that, according to Him, are what can truly make us happy.

Happiness is surely the main goal we all seek in life. And if we were to ask people how they try to be happy, or where they look for their own happiness, we would find very different answers. Some would say in a well-grounded family life; others, in having health and work; others, in enjoying friendship and leisure; and those perhaps most influenced by our consumerist society would say in having money, in being able to buy as many things as possible and, above all, in rising to higher social levels.

These Beatitudes that Jesus proposes to us are not, precisely, the ones our world today puts before us. The Lord tells us that “blessed” will be the poor in spirit, the meek, those who mourn, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure of heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness… (cf. Mt 5:3–11).

This message of the Lord is for those who want to live attitudes of detachment, humility, a desire for justice, concern and interest for the problems of their neighbor, and who place everything else in the

background.

How much good we can do by praying, or by practicing fraternal correction, when we are criticized for believing in God and for belonging to the Church! Jesus tells us this clearly in His final Beatitude: “Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me” (Mt 5:11).

Saint Basil says: “The rich man is not yet to be envied for his riches; nor the ruler for the weight of his office, nor the strong man for the robustness of his body, nor the wise man for the abundance of his speech. For these are instruments of virtue for those who use them well, not possessing blessedness in and of themselves.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “For it is not evil report that you should fear, but lest you should prove partners in dissimulation. For then, You will lose your savor, and be trodden under foot. For this is the very use of salt, to sting the corrupt.” (Saint John Chrysostom)

- “The word blessed. It is like a refrain reminding us of the Lord’s call to advance together with him on a road which, for all its many challenges, leads to true happiness.” (Francis)

- “‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’ (Mt 5:3). The Beatitudes reveal an order of happiness and grace, of beauty and peace. Jesus celebrates the joy of the poor, to whom the Kingdom already belongs.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2546)