

Reflections

Father Nicolas Schwizer

158 – July 01, 2014

Poverty – Beatitudes

The Beatitudes of Jesus present to us the program of the Kingdom of God. They are like the conditions for entering into that new Kingdom which Christ inaugurates already on earth. Especially the first, poverty, is very decisive for being an authentic Christian.

“Happy are the poor, happy the poor in spirit, because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” There is no entry for us into the Kingdom of God, if we are not poor in spirit. Because poverty is the first condition to be accessible, to be permeable to God. Poverty is the point of entry to Christian life. If we are not spiritually poor, we are not in the faith.

We know that poverty of soul is not a question of money, but a question of the heart. The fact that one does not possess money is not of itself a virtue. One may not possess one cent, but still have the attitude of a rich person. It is also possible – rarely – to possess many goods and still have the attitude of a poor man.

Evangelical poverty is a spiritual attitude, and we are all invited to practice it – doing without our wallets.

What is, then, the attitude of spiritual poverty? The poor man is disposed to allowing himself to be doubted, to allow himself to be questioned by God, always anew. He accepts allowing himself to be stripped of his positions, of his structures, of his principles, of all that is his. Happy are those who are convinced that no one is owner of himself and that God can ask for everything.

Only the poor man comes out of himself and places himself on the way. He is the one who does not resign himself to be tranquil, the one who accepts being molested by the word of God. Therefore, Abraham was the first poor man, the first one faithful to the voice of God when God told him: “Leave your country, your relatives, and your father’s home, and go to a land that I am going to show you.” (Gen 12, 1)

Abraham heard the Word of God, believed in it, abandoned his country, the comfortable site where he lived, left his goods, his habits, his past, and began the journey. And he left, “without knowing where he was going “(Hebr 11, 8) – “infallible sign that he was on the right road,” as St. Gregory of Nicea (one of the Fathers of the Church) indicates.

The poor man learns that he depends totally on God. He senses his human limitation. Ultimately, each man – perhaps without knowing it – is a poor man.

And material poverty is blessed because it is a visible sign of a poverty which is deeper and universal: our moral poverty, our miserable faith, our feeble love. We are all poor before God, with our guilt, our misery, our deficiency – but not all of us acknowledge it before God.

Only the one who knows and acknowledges his weakness and smallness before God, places his entire confidence in Him, expects everything from Him, seeks his powerful protection. In that attitude of spiritual poverty, he empties himself of himself. And because he is open and available to God, there is room for divine action. That is what we are promised by the prophet Zephaniah in the first reading: “I will leave there in your midst a humble and lowly people, and the rest of Israel will place their confidence in the name of the Lord.”

And when we imagine that we no longer have need of God, when we are satisfied with ourselves, of our knowledge, of our religious practices, that we desire nothing more, when we no longer expect anything from God – then we are rich. I think there is no greater sin than to not expect anything from God. Because if we expect nothing from God, it is because we no longer believe in Him, we no longer love Him.

Questions for reflection

1. What do I expect from God?
2. What do I understand by spiritual poverty?
3. Do I consider myself blessed

If you wish to subscribe, comment on the text or give your testimony, write to: pn.reflexiones@gmail.com
Translation: Carlos Cantú, Schoenstatt Family Federation, La Feria, Texas USA 05022014
cantu_carlos@hotmail.com