

Gospel text

Matthew 5: 1-12

1 At the sight of the crowds, Jesus then climbed the mountain. And after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 So he spoke and taught them:

- 3 Bravo, those who have the attitude of a poor,
for the world of God belongs to them.
4 Bravo, those who accept to be afflicted,
for they will one day be comforted.
5 Bravo, the meek,
for one day they will inherit the earth.
6 Bravo, those who are hungry and thirsty for justice,
because they will one day be filled.
7 Bravo, those who are compassionate,
because one will also have compassion for them.
8 Bravo, people with a transparent heart,
for they will one day see God.
9 Bravo, those who build peace,
for one day they will be called the sons of God.
10 Bravo, those who suffered persecution for seeking justice,
for the world of God is theirs.

11 Bravo, all of you, if you have ever been suffering persecution or insulting rebukes or that wickedness has been circulated wrongly about you, all because you are identified with me. 12 Be rather full of joy and rejoice, for your value is great in the eyes of God.

Gospel commentary - Homily

Well done! Keep on!

This September 11, 2001 is a date that will make history. Not only because an event that could only be imagined in an action or horror film has become reality, but war has settled very close to us, at our doors. We saw sadness, fear, anger, revenge, hatred.

It is in this context that I would like to read the Gospel of this Sunday, called: the beatitudes. We could classify it in the category "Christian ideal, but not very applicable in real life". Why would I want to be poor in spirit in a world where I have to show my skills to succeed, why would I want to become a meek in a world where it is so difficult to make my way, why would I want to be in the group of afflicted, when I love life so much, why would I want peace or mercy at all costs, when I am convinced that the choice of the Allied nations to forcibly stop Hitler's actions during the 2nd world war was the right choice?

This morning, the newspaper reported the words of a doctor of Muslim faith in connection with the events of September 11: "If Bush and his administration were authentic Christians, they would not retaliate. They would forgive as it is written in the Bible ..." Without denying the part of truth that there is in this statement, are we not caricaturing forgiveness in forgetting that it is originally addressed to those who repent, and are we not maintaining the image of the Christian who, after being struck on his right cheek, shows stoically his left cheek, who does not intervene? Karl Marx has already said of religion that it was the opium's people.

Let's look at Jesus of Nazareth. If he had been a passive being, how could he have aroused so much opposition? Jesus, a meek? We forget the scene of vendors driven out from the temple. If Jesus showed his compassion and mercy for the sinners who turned to him, did he not utter these words: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" The "pure heart" of Jesus did not prevent him from being lucid on the human heart.

Let us try to understand the meaning of the beatitudes. Bravo the **poor in spirit** or those who have the attitude of a poor, ie those who know that they have everything to learn, who are able to open themselves not only to the teaching of Jesus, but to what life teaches every day, who do not lock themselves into any ideology and hide behind a law, and are thus constantly on the move. This is why these people are also **thirsty for justice**, ie who constantly seek in each circumstance of their life the right thing to do, how to intervene or not to intervene, when to speak and when to be silent. Their **heart is pure** or transparent, because they vibrate to the essential things of life, and desire above all to see human beings in all their splendor with their need to love and to be loved, which ultimately has God as their face. Because this desire is never completely satisfied, because this world often masks essential things, they are **afflicted**, ie they suffer from what is absent or still missing. As they know that what is desired is not imposed by force or by any will to power, they are **meek**, ie they accept to follow the meanders of time and human freedom. So they are able to be **merciful** or compassionate: unable to condemn and freeze people in their current state, they hope and expect evolution. In all this, they contribute to the achievement of human fullness, and are therefore **peacemakers**, this peace that will only be complete with that which God alone can provide.

The portrait that emerges from the beatitudes is that of a being full of strength and dynamism, not that of a weak and passive being. It is the portrait of what Jesus himself was. The Jew André Chouraqui had proposed to translate "Blessed" by "Move on",

based on the Hebrew meaning. In the same vein, I would suggest translating it by: "Bravo!", with the idea of: "Well done! Keep on!"

When I set this portrait in the context of the events which followed September 11, I suddenly feel isolated: I feel far from those who, in the name of the so-called Christian ideal, advocate inaction and submission; I also feel far from those who believe that brute force and the exercise of power will resolve the situation. How uncomfortable is this world where you don't know which way to take, where you have to hesitate and look for a long time to find a solution. But to accept to take this path is to accept to take the long path of the beatitudes.

-André Gilbert, Gatineau, October 2001