



POPE FRANCIS
GENERAL AUDIENCE

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning,

Today we are beginning a series of catecheses on the Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel (5:1-11). This passage, which starts the "Sermon on the Mount", illuminated the lives of believers and also that of many non-believers. It is difficult not to be touched by these words of Jesus, and the desire to understand them and welcome them ever more fully is righteous. The Beatitudes provide the "identity card" of Christians — this is our identity card — because they outline the face of Jesus himself, his style of living.

Let us now frame Jesus' words within a wider context. Over the next catecheses we will comment on each individual Beatitude, one by one.

First of all, *how* the proclamation of this message occurred, is important: seeing the multitude that followed him, Jesus scaled the gentle slope overlooking the Sea of Galilee, sat down and, turning to the disciples, announced the Beatitudes. His message was thus addressed to his *disciples*. However, the multitude, that is, all of humanity, was on the horizon. It is a message for all of humanity.

Moreover, the "mount" recalls Sinai, where God gave Moses the Commandments. Jesus begins to teach a new law: to be poor, to be meek, to be merciful... These "new commandments" are much more than a set of rules. Indeed, Jesus does not impose anything but reveals the way of happiness — *his way* — by repeating the word "blessed" eight times.

Each Beatitude is composed of three parts. Firstly, there is always the word "blessed". Then there is the *situation* in which the blessed find themselves: poverty of spirit, affliction, hunger and thirst for justice, and so on. Lastly, there is the *reason* for the beatitude, introduced by the conjunction "because": "Blessed are they because, blessed are those because...". The eight Beatitudes are like this and it would be good to learn them off by heart so as to repeat them, to have this law that Jesus gave us, precisely in our minds and hearts.

Let us pay attention to this fact: the reason behind the Beatitudes is not a current situation, but rather the new condition that the blessed receive as a gift from God: because "theirs is the Kingdom of heaven", because "they shall be comforted", because "they shall inherit the earth" and so on.

In the third element which is the reason for happiness, Jesus often uses the future passive voice: "they shall be comforted", "they shall be satisfied", "they shall be forgiven", "they shall be called children of God".

But what does the word "*blessed*" mean? Because each of the eight Beatitudes begins with the word "*blessed*". The original term does not mean one with a full belly or one who is doing well, but rather it is a person who is in a condition of grace, who progresses in God's grace and progresses on God's path: patience, poverty, service to others, comfort... Those who advance in these things are happy and shall be blessed.

In order to give himself to us, God often chooses unthinkable paths, perhaps the path of our limitations, of our tears, of our defeats. It is the paschal joy of which our Oriental brothers and sisters speak, the one that has the stigmata but is alive, has been through death and has experienced the Power of God. The Beatitudes always bring you to joy. They are the paths to reach joy. It will do us good to take Matthew's Gospel today, chapter 5, verses 1-11, and to read the Beatitudes — perhaps a few more times throughout the week — in order to understand this very beautiful path, so sure of the happiness the Lord offers us.