

Fr. Romeo Homily
February 17, 2019
6th Sunday Ordinary Time (C)

These words of Jesus in our Gospel today can be understood at two levels, a literal one and a spiritual one. Literally, Jesus will spend the next couple of years healing the sick, consoling the grieving, occasionally feeding multitudes, welcoming the outcast—and so, all these categories of people will be the fortunate beneficiaries of his action. And, after him, his disciples will be mandated to continue this charitable activity of his and thus alleviate all forms of suffering. However, during his ministry Jesus will also relieve the miseries of the soul and he expected his disciples to do the same after him. That is why his words can also be taken figuratively—what Matthew does in his version of the Beatitudes. And this means, of course, that the spiritually hungry for God, those grieving because of their sins, those tormented by despair and self-pity, will be the fortunate beneficiaries of the Good News of the Gospel. With the coming of Jesus they are blessed indeed, since their spiritual misery is about to be relieved.

Naturally, in the logic of what was just said, we can now understand why the “rich”, that is, the materially well-off and those who do not feel any special interest in the things of God, are to be pitied. They are not in a position to appreciate what the coming of Jesus represents. They are even worse off than the poor. This idea is well expressed by author John Maxwell when he states the following:

“The poorest person in the world”, he says, is not the person who doesn’t have a nickel. The poorest person in the world is the one who doesn’t have a vision. If you don’t have a dream—a goal and a purpose in life—you’re never going to become what you could become”.

Bernard Shaw, the Irish playwright, says the same thing but in a paradoxical way: “There are two tragedies in life”, he writes, “One is not to get your heart’s desire. The other is to get it”. Here, of course, those who get their heart’s desire are those who try to satisfy their spiritual thirst with material things. They think they have received their heart’s desire already in this life, and that is a tragedy indeed.

The bottom line is that we are made for God. Nothing less can make us really happy. Ask the rich and famous if their money or their fame makes them happy. Because only God can make us happy, any luck we experience, whether material or spiritual, is a blessing in disguise, a beatitude, because it reminds us of our radical poverty. We do not possess in ourselves our source of happiness, and that is our basic poverty. When we acknowledge it and turn to God, then we are walking towards happiness. Until we reach heaven where finally we will be happy, we will never be perfectly satisfied. To be aware of this fact is a blessing, Jesus tells us— because to be aware of this fact is to be able to seek happiness in the only place where it can be found: GOD.

“Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord”.