



Let us go out to meet Jesus.

He opens the gate to happiness for us!

Jesus and Zacchaeus

Jesus looks up and calls out to him. No matter how great our sin, how deep our fall, as long as we climb in faith up the tree of the promise, our eyes will meet those of our Redeemer. Not the eyes of a judge scrutinizing us from above in the heavens, but the eyes of a brother in humanity

who took on the weight of each and every one of us and lifts His eyes to us from the depths, where His solidarity led Him. [...] ⁽¹⁾

“Zacchaeus, come down quickly”: what good is it to try to raise yourself up to God when He has come down to you? “Today I must stay at your



house.” Zacchaeus can hardly believe his ears: he has climbed up in his tree to “see” Jesus discretely, and it ends up being him who is “seen” by the Teacher who even invites Himself to his house! [...] ⁽²⁾

Jesus begins to proclaim His path to happiness with a paradoxical announcement: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3). It is a surprising path, and poverty is a strange condition for beatitude.

We have to ask ourselves: what does He mean here by the “poor”? If Matthew had only used this word, then the meaning would have been simply economic, that is, it would have meant people who have few or no means of sustenance and need the help of others.

However, unlike Luke’s Gospel, the Gospel of Matthew speaks about “poor in spirit.” What does this mean? In the Bible, the spirit is the breath of life that God communicated to Adam: it is our most intimate dimension, let us say the spiritual dimension, the most intimate one, the one that makes us human beings, the profound core of our being. Thus, “the poor in spirit” are those who are and who feel poor, mendicants in their intimate being. Jesus proclaims them blessed because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

How many times have we been told the opposite! You have to be something in life, be someone... One must make a name for oneself... Loneliness and unhappiness stem from this: if I have to be “someone,” then I am in competition



with others and I worry excessively about my ego. If I do not accept being poor, I hate everything that reminds me of my fragility because this fragility prevents me from becoming an important person, someone who is rich, not only moneywise, even well-known: everything.

Before oneself, everyone knows well that, as much as one does one's best, one remains radically incomplete and vulnerable. There is no trick to cover up this vulnerability. Each of us is vulnerable inside. One has to see where. But how trying life is if one does not accept one's limitations! Life is hard. One suffers. One does not get past the limitation; it is still there.

Proud people do not ask for help. They cannot ask for help. It does not come easily to them to ask for help because they have to appear self-sufficient. How many of them do need help, but their pride prevents them from asking for it. How difficult it is to admit a mistake and ask for forgiveness!



When I offer advice to newlyweds who ask me how to live their marriage well, I tell them: “There are three magic words: please, thank you, I’m sorry”. They are words that come from poverty in spirit. One must not be intrusive but rather ask permission: “Do you think it is good to do this?” so there can be dialogue in the family, spouses are in dialogue. “You did this for me, thank you; I needed it.”

We always make mistakes, one slips: “I’m sorry.” And usually couples, newlyweds - those who are here and are numerous - tell me: “The third one is the hardest,” saying sorry, asking for forgiveness. Because proud

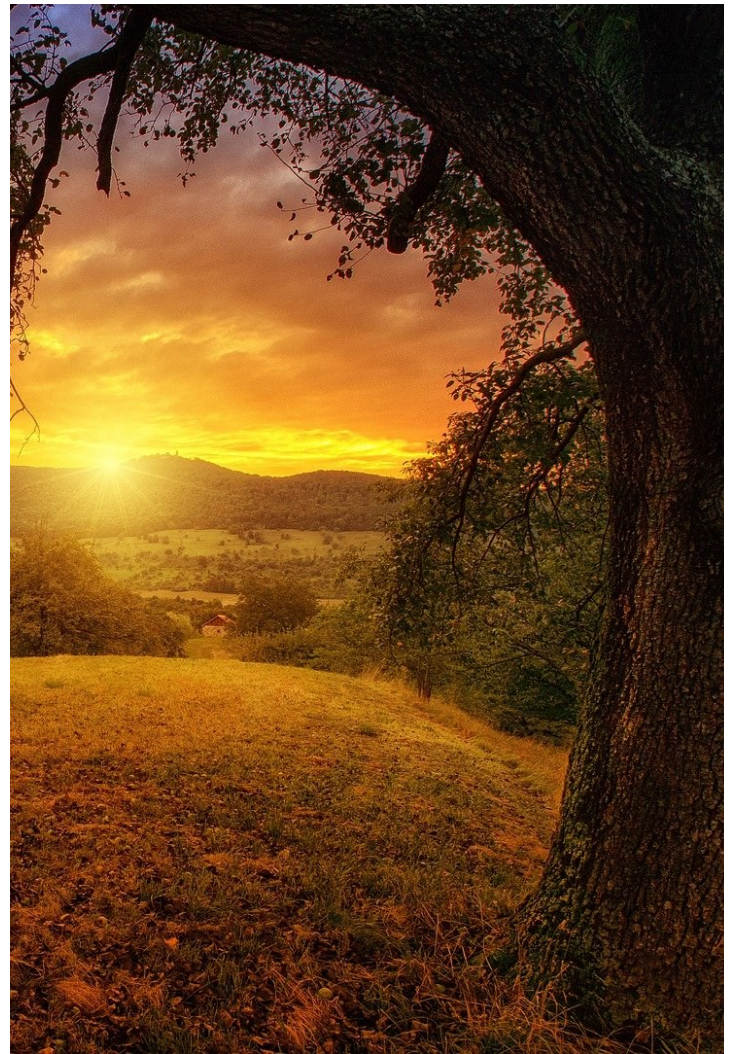
people cannot do this. They cannot say they are sorry: they are always right. They are not poor in spirit. The Lord, however, never grows tired of forgiving. Unfortunately, it is we who get tired of asking for forgiveness (cf. Angelus, 17 March 2013). The tiredness of asking for forgiveness. This is a bad state!

Why is it difficult to ask for forgiveness? Because it humiliates our hypocritical image. And yet, constantly seeking to hide one’s weaknesses is tiring and distressing. Jesus Christ tells us: being poor is an opportunity for grace, and He shows us the way out from this difficulty. We are given the

right to be poor in spirit because this is the path to the Kingdom of God.

We must recall something fundamental: we do not have to transform ourselves to become poor in spirit. We do not have to undergo any transformation because we already are! We are poor ... or more clearly: we are “wretched” in spirit! We are in need of everything. We are all poor in spirit, we are beggars. It is the human condition.

The Kingdom of God belongs to the poor in spirit. There are those who have kingdoms in this world: they have goods and comforts. But they are kingdoms that end. The power of men and women, even of the greatest empires, passes and disappears. We often see on the television news or in newspapers that some strong, powerful leader or some government that existed yesterday and no longer exists today, has fallen. The wealth of this world fades away and so does money. Our elders used to teach us that shrouds have no pockets. It is true. I never saw a moving truck



behind a funeral procession: no one takes anything with them. This wealth stays here.

The Kingdom of God belongs to the poor in spirit. There are those who have kingdoms in this world, they have goods and comforts. But we know how they end. The only ones who reign are those who know how to love what is truly good more than they love themselves. This is the power of God.



In what way did Christ show His power? It was by doing what the kings of the earth do not do: give His life for mankind. And this is true power. The power of fraternity, the power of charity, the power of love, the power of humility. This is what Christ did.

Herein lies true freedom: those who have this power of humility, of service, of fraternity are free. The poverty praised in the Beatitudes is at the service of this freedom. Because there is a poverty that we have to accept, that of being alive, and a poverty that instead we have to seek, the practical one, in the things of this world, in order to be free and to be able to love. We should always

seek freedom of the heart, the freedom that has its roots in our own poverty. ⁽³⁾

**“Being poor of heart:
that is holiness!”**

(1) <http://choralecsfa.canalblog.com/archives/2016/11/15/34569149.html>

(2) Ibid.

(3) POPE FRANCIS: GENERAL AUDIENCE – Wednesday, February 5, 2020



Prayer

Deliver us, Lord, from all that hinders us, from all our covetousness and tacit consent, from our vanities and wealth, the wealth that we will lose one day, in any case. Help us, Lord, to become poor, without ostentation nor compromise, detached from everything, even our ideas, free from everything, even our habits. Then we will be able to give others our full attention and enter here and now, light and transparent, into the joy of Your Kingdom.

(Gilbert Cesbron)