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**LASALLIAN SPIRITUALITY  
A CHRISTIAN JOURNEY  
— VI —**

**Brother Gilles Beaudet**

**3. THE CHALLENGE  
OF THE BEATITUDES (continued)**

**3. *Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted.***

“These are those who do penance for their sins, who weep over the sins of others, who mourn at seeing themselves in a foreign land and far from God” (Duties, p.190)

What happiness is in store for them? “In heaven they will experience unimaginable joy without any trace of sadness” (Duties, p.190). Jesus referred to this when he said: “...while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy” (Jn 16,20). St La Salle says: “The happiness of the servants of God, in fact, is in the heart...for it is grounded on that which sustains the life of grace in their soul” (Med. 34,2). Elsewhere he gives a harsh warning: “Woe to those who think only of pleasing themselves in this world, because their pleasure will not last long!” It’s a warning that is unsettling, but are we sure it does not reflect experience?

We can understand this “sadness” of “those who mourn” in the context of interior penance. It leads to a conversion of the heart which is accompanied by a salutary pain and sadness which the Fathers called “affliction of the spirit” and “repentance of the heart” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, N 1431).

**4. *Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied.***

The explanation given by La Salle is easily understood despite the use of rather dated vocabulary: “Those who hunger and thirst...are those who, seeing themselves very far from the perfection God asks of them, are constantly animated by the desire and will they have to attain it”. It is a question, therefore, of never tiring of accomplishing the loving plan he has for us.

And what does this attitude and this beatitude bring us? “They will be satisfied, because in heaven they will possess fully what they have so much desired while on earth” (Duties, p.191). It is clear that heaven will fulfil the desires of the just person: he will see God face to face. But also, even here below, the person who tries to do what God expects of him cannot fail to be overwhelmed by God’s love. As the Apostle James wrote: “The nearer you go to God, the nearer he will come to you” (Jm 4,8). This is not an empty promise.

As a full disciple of Jesus, the disciple of La Salle cannot refuse to follow this path.

**5. *Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.***

“Those who are merciful are those who have much tenderness and compassion for their neighbour, and who try to comfort him in his misery” (Duties, p.191).

A Christian life plan which is very much up to date. We have only to recall the insistence there is on the task we have to help the underprivileged, the rejects of society and those in need. Of course, unfortunately not everyone in this world thinks along these lines. However an enormous number of people do: organisations which help people in need are innumerable. They practise, often without knowing it, the Christian law contained in this 5th beatitude. Can we Christians do less, especially as the reward is so great?: “God will easily forgive them all their faults”. This reflects the law of scripture which says: “Charity covers a multitude of sins”. To be merciful is not to be heroic: it is something that already exists in the human heart if its values have not been perverted. Jesus has given us the example of the merciful Samaritan as a contrast with non-Christian behaviour. He has given us the example of the insensitive rich man who despised Lazarus, who was dying of hunger at his door. The rich man’s faults were not forgiven.

**6. *Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God.***

The pure in heart “are those who have a heart exempt from all vice and attachment (affection) to the smallest sin, and who attach themselves solely to God”.

This is a purity which is not limited to the colour of the skin, but which consists above all in total openness of the heart to God. Total openness to God consists also in respecting one’s body and that of others, since God requires this. But it is God himself who is primarily the inspiration for this respect: “...you were God’s temple” (1 Co 3,16). “The temple of God is sacred; and you are that temple” (1 Co 3,17). It is by these words that Paul expresses the profound meaning of a pure mind and of pure conduct.

Why are such people happy? Because they will see God. Jesus did not promise that this vision of God would come about only in the after life. The pure heart, which is the true Temple of the Holy Spirit, bears God within itself. How could they not see him? La Salle says: “There is no darkness in their soul which prevents them from seeing eternal truths.” It is also a question of values: “Where his treasure is, there also is his heart”. The truth of this is self-evident.

**7. Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God. (Duties, p.191).**

There is a constant factor in the beatitudes: they all give us God directly or indirectly.

The peacemakers “fight to overcome their passions in order to have and preserve peace with God, with their neighbour and with themselves.”

It seems here that La Salle applies his explanation of the text more specifically to the community life of his disciples. The lesson he draws, however, is valid for all Christians. The Christian must be a peacemaker, someone who is an instrument of peace, as described by St Francis in his beautiful prayer. Our world has a great need of these instruments of peace at a time when those who buy peace are becoming increasingly rare. Surely no other time has known so much violence as ours has. There is violence between nations, violence to children, to women, to the defenceless, violence during robbery, violence in sport, on school playgrounds...Violence is no longer inhibited by respect for others. Our Gospel beatitude is more than ever relevant.

The person, however, who does “violence to his passions” practises a holy violence of good against evil. “The Kingdom of Heaven suffers the violent and only the violent will get in”. There is no contradiction in the message even if the words are similar. It is used in a different context and situation. It is certain that in order to produce peace, war must be declared on selfishness and egoists will object. As St Thomas said, peace is tranquility in order. These are not ideas picked out of the air. Order is the result of justice, equity and respect for the law. When this kind of order reigns, everyone is respected and no one tries to exploit others. Hotbeds of violence are not created. The peacemaker creates justice: the beatitudes overlap and support one another. They have been described as a “charter for Christian life”. One could almost call them a “charter for a happy life in society”, if people had the courage to take them seriously and practice them in the name of Jesus.

Peacemakers reap the fruit of their labours. “They shall be called the sons of God.” Why? La Salle tells us: “Because they will resemble God and Jesus Christ who has always possessed peace and who came to bring it to the world.” Even though in Matthew (10,34) we read: “It is not peace I have come to bring...”, we have to take the context into account, as in the case of the word “violence”. This is not a peace that consists in indifference to God, refusal of God and sin. Jesus’ last words to us are carefully chosen: “Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace that the world cannot give.” (Jn, 14,27). This is the peace of the true sons of God; the peace of the peacemakers whose task it is to create, not the peace of the graveyard, but the peace of the living God. “I have come so that they may have peace more abundantly”.

**8. Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Who are these? La Salle explains: “These are those who are persecuted for the faith or religion by unbelievers. They are also those who, because of the holy life they lead, are scorned, despised and badly treated by those who live disordered lives” (Duties, p.192).

This looks clear enough and relevant to our times. It is not easy to live a holy life in present society without being ridiculed or even persecuted.

And what happiness is promised them? “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven because nothing ensures eternal happiness more than persecution suffered for the sake of God”. This reflects Jesus’ promise: “Seek the kingdom of God and its justice and the rest shall be given you”. It recalls also what St Paul said: “Neither death, nor cold...can separate us from the love of Jesus Christ.” This is the same as saying that, if we are so deeply attached to Jesus Christ that we do not react to insults, scorn, bad example and persecution, then he is already our reward here below and will certainly be so for all eternity.

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**Conclusion**

Living according to the beatitudes isn’t like dreaming in technicolour or floating around on clouds. On the contrary, it means being totally involved in life, because it is in this life that a Christian can find himself swallowed up by materialism, if he does not manage to become poor of heart, or be ground down by poverty caused by the selfishness of the better off. What the Gospel encourages is poverty of heart and not the misery of poverty. The more “poor of heart” there are, the fewer Lazaruses there will be, begging at the imposing doors of the heartless wealthy.

It is in this world that we have the opportunity to practise gentleness, to experience tears, to fight for justice and holiness, to be merciful, to purify our hearts, to be instruments of peace, to live our Christian faith in the face of opposition from non-believers, the lapsed and even from persecutors. The beatitudes are an easily accessible explanation of how to live according to the Gospel and not beyond the courage of our faith. This is what St John Baptist de La Salle says to all Christians. He says it also to us who wish to live according to his spirituality.

When La Salle chose an extract from the Gospel for inclusion in his “mass book” as the key-text of the word of God, he turned to the beatitudes. They’re like a standard. We who wish to be Lasallians shouldn’t forget to make room for this eight-pointed star in our programme, for it indicates the way to perfection. •