“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God.”

(Mt 5:8)

Jesus begins his preaching with the sermon on the Mount. On a broad, low hill a few hundred yards from the Tiberias lakeside, near Capernaum, Jesus sits down, as was customary for teachers, and proclaims the beatitudes to the crowds. The word “blessed,” that is, the exaltation of those who, in a variety of ways, fulfilled the Word of the Lord, resounded a number of times in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The beatitudes of Jesus partly echoed ones the disciples already knew. For the first time, however, they were hearing that the pure of heart were not only worthy of going up the mountain of the Lord, as sung in Psalm 24:3-4, but that they could even see God. What sublime purity was this that could merit so much? Jesus would explain it several times during the course of his preaching. Let us try to follow him then so we can draw from the fount of authentic purity.

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First of all, Jesus says that there is one supreme means of purification: “You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you” (Jn 15:3). His word, more than the practice of religious rites, purifies a person’s inner self. The word of Jesus is not like human words. Christ is present in his word, as he is present, although in another way, in the Eucharist. Through his word Christ

enters within us and, provided we allow him to act, he makes us free from sin and therefore pure of heart.

Thus, purity is the fruit of living all the words of Jesus. They free us from the so-called attachments that inevitably drag us down if our hearts are not in God and in his teachings. These could be attachments to things, people, ourselves. But if our hearts are focused on God alone, everything else falls away.

To achieve this, it can be useful to repeat throughout the day to Jesus, to God, the invocation of the psalm that says: “You, Lord, are my only good” (Ps 16:2). Let us try to repeat it often, especially when attachments of many kinds seek to pull our hearts toward those images, sentiments and passions that can blur the vision of good and take away our freedom.

Are we inclined to look at provocative ads or posters, or watch unwholesome television programs? Then let’s repeat to him, “You, Lord, are my only good.” Re-declaring our love for God will be the first step toward going out of ourselves. And by doing so we will have gained in purity.

Do we sometimes feel that a person or an activity comes between us and God, like an obstacle that blocks our relationship with him? This is a moment to repeat, “You, Lord, are my only good.” This will help us to purify our intentions and regain inner freedom.

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Living the Scriptures makes us free and pure, and to put them into practice means to love. The divine fire of love purifies our intentions and all our inner self. In the Bible the heart is

considered to be the deepest seat of intelligence and will.

But there is one love that Jesus commands us to practice that enables us to live this beatitude. It is mutual love, being ready to give our lives for each other, following the example of Jesus. This love creates a flow, an atmosphere that has the quality of leading its participants to be transparent, pure of heart, because of the presence of God. He alone can make us pure of heart. It is by living mutual love that the word produces its effects of purification and sanctification.

As isolated individuals, each of us cannot resist the world's solicitations for long. Instead, mutual love provides a healthy environment capable of protecting our entire authentic Christian existence and, in particular, our purity.

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These then are the fruits of purity, constantly reacquired: we can "see" God, that is, we can understand his action in our own lives and in history; we can hear his voice in our hearts; we can discern his presence in the poor, in the Eucharist, in his word, in brotherly communion, in the Church.

It is a foretaste of the presence of God that already begins in this life, "for we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7), but a presence that we will "see … face to face" (1 Cor 13:12) for all eternity.

- ***Chiara Lubich***

Read more on this topic:

- Chiara Lubich, The Art of Loving, New City Press

- “Enlarge your heart,” in Essential Writings, New City Press, p.81. newcitypress.com

Next month:

“Nothing will be impossible for God.” (Lk 1:37)

The Word of Life, a sentence of Scripture, is offered each month as a guide and inspiration for daily life. Its translation into 90 different languages and dialects reaches several million people worldwide, through print, radio, TV and the internet. From the Focolare Movement’s beginnings, Chiara Lubich wrote her commentaries on the Word of Life, and after her death on March 14, 2008, her early writings are now being featured once again. This commentary was originally published in October 1999. If you would like to read experiences of life related to this or to past

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