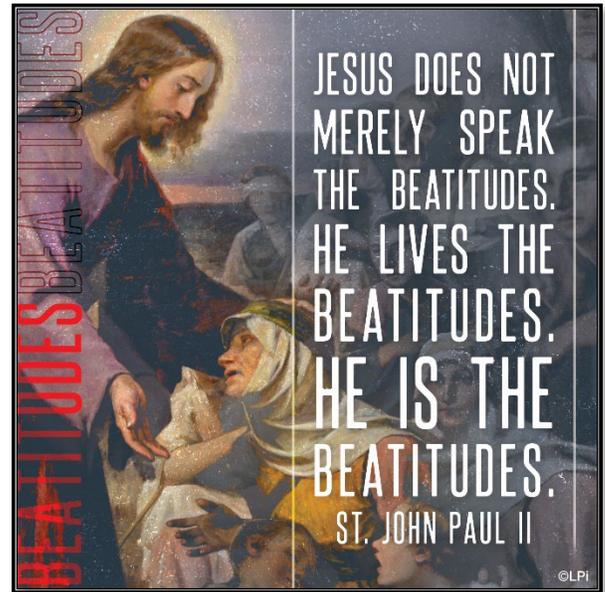


Dear Friends,

“Blessed are you who are poor in spirit, gentle and merciful, you who mourn, who care for what is right, who are pure in heart, blessed are you who make peace, you who are persecuted! Blessed are you!” The words of Jesus may seem strange. It is strange that Jesus exalts those whom the world generally regards as weak. Following the voice of Christ is hard; applying the Beatitudes into daily life is not easy. Even understanding them is very difficult. Have you noticed that the Beatitudes contradict each other? For example, “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness” and “Blessed are the merciful...” So, who is blessed - those who do justice or those who are merciful? How is it possible to be just and merciful at the same time?



To help us to understand the Beatitudes I would like to refer to one of the greatest sermons ever given. This sermon was given over 800 years ago by the St. Bernard of Clairvaux. The sermon has this interesting title: **The Four Daughters of God**. They are Truth, Justice, Mercy and Peace. In the sermon, the Four Daughters come before God after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. It was a kind of trial. Truth spoke first and pointed out the obvious: Adam and Eve had every benefit, but they turned their back on God. Next came Justice who said that the man and woman did not deserve a second chance. They knew the rules and they intentionally broke them. But Mercy said, “Yes, I agree they do not merit a second chance, but, still, I plead for them.” Finally, Peace said that if God did not do something for Adam and Eve, there would only be enmity between heaven and earth.

God was faced with a dilemma. He loves all of his daughters - but how could he affirm one without losing another? Strict justice seems to exclude mercy. Keeping the peace seems to require compromising a bit of the truth. Here on earth we sometimes falsify the truth in order to keep the peace. But it cannot be that way in heaven. How does God keep his daughters together: Justice with Mercy and Peace with Truth? God came up with this solution: He would himself become man. **Jesus, who is God in human flesh - brings together truth and peace, justice and mercy.** We see this in the Beatitudes. Jesus is the poor man - the one who emptied himself. He brings together righteousness (justice) and mercy. In Jesus, God shows us that justice and mercy can live together. Jesus alone makes peace between heaven and earth. Even though he created the whole Universe, he walked humbly on this small planet Earth. He put up with insults and false accusations from people he himself created. He did all this for only one reason - to bring us salvation, to bring peace between heaven and earth. In the end, Jesus does not merely speak the Beatitudes. He lives the Beatitudes. Jesus is the Beatitudes.

Peace,

Fr. Krzysztof Kardzis