



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** *Library of the Apostolic Palace*

Wednesday, 1st April 2020 **[Multimedia]**

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning,

Today, let us read together the sixth Beatitude which promises the vision of God and has *purity of heart* as a condition.

There is a Psalm that reads: “my heart says to thee, ‘Thy face, Lord, do I seek.’ Hide not thy face from me” (Ps 27[28]:8-9).

This language manifests the thirst for a personal relationship with God, not a mechanical one, not a somewhat vague one, no: personal, which the Book of Job also expresses as a sign of a sincere relationship. The Book of Job reads: “I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see thee” (42:5). And often I think that this is the journey of life, in our relationship with God. We know God from hearsay, but with our experience, we go forward, forward, forward, and in the end, we come to know him directly, if we are faithful ... And this is the maturity of the Spirit.

How do we reach this intimacy, to know God with our eyes? We can think of the disciples at Emmaus, for example, who have the Lord beside them but “their eyes were kept from recognizing him” (Lk 24:16). The Lord will open their eyes at the end of a journey that culminates with the breaking of bread and had begun with a scolding: “O Foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (Lk 24:25). This is the reprimand at the beginning. It is the root of their blindness: their hearts were foolish and slow. And when the heart is foolish and slow, things cannot be seen. Things appear foggy. Herein lies the wisdom of this Beatitude: in order to contemplate it, we need to enter within ourselves and make room for God because, as Saint Augustine says, God is “more inward than my innermost self” (“*interior intimo meo*” Confessions iii, 6, 11). In order to see God, there is neither the need to change eyeglasses or vantage point, nor to change the theological authors who teach the path: we need to free the heart from its deception. This is the only path.

This is a decisive maturity: when we realize that our worst enemy is often hidden within our heart. The most noble battle is the one against the inner deception that creates our sins. Because sins change our inner vision, they change our evaluation of things. They make us see things that are not real or at least not *that* real.

It is thus important to understand what *purity of heart* is. In order to do so, we should remember that, for the Bible, the heart does not consist only in feelings, but rather it is a human being's most intimate place, the inner space where people are themselves. This is according to the Bible.

The Gospel of Matthew itself says "if our eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Matt 6:23). This light is the gaze of the heart, the perspective, synthesis and the point from which reality can be seen (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 143).

But what does having a "*pure*" heart mean? A pure heart lives in the presence of the Lord, preserving in the heart what is worthy of the relationship with him. Only in this way can one possess an intimate life that is "*unified*, linear and unwinding.

A purified heart is, therefore, the result of a process that implies liberation and renunciation. Those who are pure of heart are not born that way but rather they have experienced an inner simplification, learning to renounce the evil within oneself, which the Bible calls circumcision of the heart (cf. Dt 10:16; 30:6, Ex 44:9; Jer 4:4).

This inner purification implies recognition of the part of the heart that is under the influence of evil — "You know Father, I feel this way, I think this way, I see this way and this is bad": recognizing the bad part, the part that is clouded by evil — in order to learn the art of always allowing ourselves to be trained and guided by the Holy Spirit. The journey from a sick heart, from a sinful heart, from a heart that cannot see things well because it is in sin, to the fullness of the light of the heart, is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who guides us to take this journey. Through this journey of the heart, we can achieve "seeing God".

In this *beatific vision*, there is an eschatological dimension of the future, as with all Beatitudes: it is the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven towards which we are directed. But there is also the other dimension: to see God means understanding the design of Providence in what happens to us, to recognize his presence in the Sacraments, his presence in our brothers and sisters, especially the poor and the suffering, and to recognize God there where he manifests himself (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2519).

This Beatitude is somewhat the fruit of the preceding ones: if we have listened to the thirst for good that dwells within us and we are aware of living of mercy, a journey of freedom begins which lasts an entire lifetime and leads us to Heaven. It is serious work, work that is carried out by the Holy Spirit if we give him the room to do it, if we are open to the action of the Holy Spirit. This is

why we can say that it is mostly the work of God in us — in the trials and the purifications of life — and this is the work of God and of the Holy Spirit who brings great joy, true and profound peace. Let us not be afraid, let us open the doors of our heart to the Holy Spirit so that he may purify us and lead us forward in this journey towards full joy.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media, as we continue on our Lenten journey towards Easter. Upon you and your families, I invoke the strength and peace that come from our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!

Lastly, I greet *young people*, the *sick*, the *elderly* and *newlyweds*. May the last glimpse of the Lenten season that we are experiencing, foster a suitable preparation for the celebration of Easter, leading each of us to an even deeper closeness to Christ. I offer my Blessing to everyone.
