

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A

[Zeph. 2:3; 3:12-13; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; Mt. 5:1-12a]

Excerpts from Pope Francis – *Angelus* - 29 January 2023

by Father Charles Fillion

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Brothers and sisters, as you know, we have two versions of the Beatitudes. There is the one from Luke, and today we have Matthew. Of the nine Beatitudes, the first is fundamental. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. Who are the “poor in spirit”? They are the ones who know they are not enough for themselves, that they are not self-sufficient, and they live as “beggars for God”. They feel their need for God and recognize that every good comes from him as a gift, as a grace. Those who are poor in spirit treasure what they receive. Therefore, they desire that *no gift should go to waste*.

Today, let us pause on this typical aspect of the poor in spirit: *not wasting*. The poor in spirit try not to waste anything. Jesus shows us the importance of not wasting. For example, after the multiplication of the loaves and the fish, he asks that the leftover food be gathered so that nothing is wasted (cf. *Jn* 6:12). Not wasting allows us to appreciate the value of ourselves, of people and of things. Unfortunately, however, this principle is often disregarded, above all in more affluent societies where the culture of waste and the throw-away culture are predominant. Both are a plague. So, what can we do, what can I do?

I propose to you *three challenges* against the waste and throw-away mentality. The first challenge: *not to waste the gift that we are*. Each one of us is a good, independent of the gifts we have. Every woman, every man, is rich not only in talents, but in dignity. He or she is loved by God, is valuable, is precious. Jesus reminds us that we are blessed not for what we have, but for who we are. And when a person lets go and throws him or herself away, he or she wastes him or herself. Let us fight, with God’s help, against the temptation to believe ourselves inadequate, wrong, and to feel sorry for ourselves. That was the first challenge. It is easy enough but also can be difficult.

The second challenge: *not to waste the gifts we have*. It turns out that about one-third of total food production goes to waste in the world each year, while so many die of hunger! Nature’s resources cannot be used like this. Goods should be taken care of and shared in such a way that no one lacks what is necessary. In the words of Pope Francis, “let us not waste what we have; rather, let us distribute an ecology of justice and charity, of sharing!” This should not be difficult to do. Just simply look at what you have, and see how *not to waste the gifts we have*.

Lastly, the third challenge: *not to throw people away*. I think this is the most difficult for our society. The throw-away culture says, “I use you insofar as I need you. When I am not interested in you anymore, or you are in my way, I throw you out”.

It is especially the weakest who are treated this way: unborn children, the elderly, the needy and the disadvantaged. But people are never to be thrown out; the disadvantaged cannot be thrown away! Every person is a sacred gift, each person is a unique gift, no matter what their age or condition. Let us always respect and promote life! Let's not throw life away!

Brothers and sisters, let us ask ourselves some questions. Above all: How do I live poverty of spirit? Do I know how to make room for God? Do I believe that he is my good, my true and great wealth? Do I believe that he loves me, or do I throw myself away in sadness, forgetting that I am a gift? And then: Am I careful not to waste? Am I responsible about how I use things, goods? And am I willing to share them with others, or am I selfish? Lastly: Do I consider the weakest as precious gifts whom God asks me to care for? Do I remember the poor, those who are deprived of what is necessary?

May this eucharist help us be people of the Beatitudes, help us witness the joy that life is a gift and the beauty of making a gift of ourselves.