
« WITH EYES FIXED ON JESUS CHRIST »



Continuing our 2002 Lenten reflection and spiritual preparation for the 2002 World Youth Day, I bid you fix your gaze on Jesus himself. If Lent is a favourable time for such a loving and faith-filled act, the WYD will be a marvellous opportunity for us to witness to our love for Jesus, true God and true man, and our Saviour, Emmanuel. This sharing together of our common desire to know Jesus better will bring together the different faith expressions in our individual dioceses as well as at Toronto. These days will truly become unforgettable expressions of faith.

THE BEATITUDES

The WYD *Salt and Light* handbook has Pope John Paul II's beautiful meditation at the Mount of Beatitudes, when he visited the Holy Land in 2000. Speaking to the youth, he said: *«How many generations before us have been deeply moved by the Sermon on the Mount! How many young people down the centuries have gathered around Jesus to learn the words of eternal life, as you are gathered here today! How many young hearts have been inspired by the power of his personality and the compelling truth of his message! It is wonderful that you are here! [...] Jesus does not merely speak the Beatitudes. He lives the Beatitudes,. He is the Beatitudes. Looking at him you will see what it means to be poor in spirit, gentle and merciful, to mourn, to care for what is right, to be pure in heart, to be a peacemaker, to be persecuted. This is why he has the right to say, 'Come, follow me!' He does not say simply, 'Do what I say'. He says, 'Come, follow me!' »*

MORE THAN AN EXPERIENCE OF HAPPINESS

Jesus is not only an experienced wise man, he is also the one who fully lives the beatitudes he proposes. The "Beatitudes" recorded at the very beginning of Jesus' inaugural speech are the charter of Christian happiness, the "war" which the Christian disciple wages in order to remain forever faithful to the Master of life. Jesus comes from God to say YES to the Old Testament promises; the Kingdom of God is given, needs and adversities are suppressed, and mercy and life are granted in God. If some of these beatitudes are formulated in the future, the first one, which practically contains all the others, is immediately made present, but there is more: the Beatitudes are God's YES in Jesus. While the Old Testament was able to identify beatitude and God Himself, Jesus presents himself as the one in whom the desire of the ages is accomplished. The Kingdom of God is now. It was Jesus' desire to "embody" the beatitudes by perfectly living them and by showing himself to be meek and humble in heart. This Word is accomplished today.

HAPPINESS, FINALLY!

Jesus can all our deepest needs. He can respond to the search for happiness which young people have undertaken or are now undertaking, during this period of preparing for WYD 2002. Our faith in Jesus can only develop and grow through our meditating the Word of God, reading a Gospel, reflection and sharing. As on the Emmaus road, Jesus wants to walk with the youth and adults of today. As with the mourners at Emmaus who had lost hope, Jesus once again walks with those who are heavily burdened and weighted down. He once again explains the Scriptures to them, restores their hope, shares a meal with them, and breaks open the bread of life. "Were not our hearts aflame as he talked to us on the road?" (Lk. 24:32) In many ways the WYD

experience is like the disciples' encounter with Christ at Emmaus, a meeting that would change everything, one that brings back life and hope and new meaning to the human adventure. It is not all of the hundreds of thousands of young people at the WYD who will get this "super feeling" of happiness, and not all of them will feel like truly celebrating. They will be here from over 140 countries, several of which have experienced the harsh reality of war, and still do. Not all of these young people are experiencing the Beatitude joy.

A STRUGGLE

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus had but one wish, "To love Jesus and have him loved by others." I share this desire: to love Jesus and to have him loved by those who have been given to my care. Jesus has done so much to make us happy; I urge you to undertake the journey and to experience the kingdom of joy.

Let us share in God's struggle with eyes fixed on Jesus Christ;
Let us take the Road to life with the strength of the Spirit.

Let us look at Jesus living simply, in solidarity with the needy.
He says: Forward, you poor of heart! You are priceless in the Father's eyes.

Let us look at Jesus, meek and humble in heart. To the crowds who have no shepherd
He says: Forward, all you who are non-violent! Be as simple as doves and wily as serpents!

Let us look at Jesus help of the afflicted, salvation of the sick liberation of the poor.
He says: Forward, you afflicted ones! Come to me, you who are burdened and heavy-laden.

Let us look at Jesus the friend of justice. He brings dignity to every human being.
He says: Forward, you honest people! Because justice is the Father's path!

Let us look at Jesus the merciful one. Let us learn from him the meaning of compassion.
He says: Forward, you who are merciful! You are like my Father, and you too shall rule!

Let us look at Jesus who gives without cost. In him is honesty, in him is truth.
He says: Forward, all of you with pure hearts! You shall see the face of God.
I am the Way and the Life!

Let us look at Jesus source of peace, of peace promised to people of goodwill.
He says: Forward, you peacemakers, because you are all children of my Father!

Let us look at Jesus, the victim of hatred. Tortured, flogged, put to death, crucified.
He says: Forward, you persecuted ones! The gift of your life is proof of Love!

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