

All Saints Day
November 1, 2009

Here's a million dollar question: "What must we do to inherit the kingdom of God?"

A few weeks ago, a young, rich man asked this exact question to Jesus and Jesus' response was to follow the law and the commandments as well as to sell everything, give to the poor, and follow him.

Last week, Bartimaeus asked to see; but, he could already do so because by faith, he believed and could see that Jesus is the Christ.

And by having this faith in Jesus, he will undoubtedly receive the kingdom of God.

In this week's readings, unlike the past couple of weeks, we do not have a formula for how to live our lives so as to receive the kingdom of God.

Rather, we are informed of the type of people who will receive the kingdom of God.

And these people are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, and those who are insulted.

These characteristics and values are not guidelines for living so as to receive the kingdom of God...who on earth could do that?

They are descriptions of those whom the kingdom is promised to.

They contain within themselves a certain attitude that a person must possess for entering the kingdom of God such as being meek.

They inform us of the honorable intentions in religious practices that are needed for entering the kingdom of God such as enduring insults and persecutions for the sake of righteousness.

They point us toward having trust in God's divine providence.

They tell us how we are to behave towards one another if we want to enter the kingdom of God such as by practicing mercy and peace.

All in all, these characteristics and values contain the conditions necessary for entering the kingdom of God.

And as we look closer at them, we realize that we're already there.

In other words, these qualities describe each and every one of us in some way or another.

In some sense, we are poor in spirit or at least strive to be.

This does not refer to a material poverty.

Rather, the poor in spirit is one who trusts in God and does not rely on his own merits and strengths to save him.

We mourn by suffering affliction.

This affliction could be the loss of a loved one, it could be having to face an illness head on, or it could be repenting for the sins we have committed against God.

Either way, we all mourn in some sense or another.

St. Josemaria Escriva said this about mourning: “You are crying?

Don’t be ashamed of it. Yes, cry: men also cry like you, when they are alone and before God. Each night, says King David, I soak my bed with tears. With those tears, those burning manly tears, you can purify your past and supernaturalize your present life” (The Way, 216).

We are meek in that we strive to patiently suffer unjust persecutions and not give in to resentment or discouragement when things don’t go our way.

We all hunger and thirst for righteousness in that we hunger and thirst for holiness, namely, doing the will of God by following the commandments, praying, and living out our state of life.

We strive to practice mercy in all aspects of our lives by not only helping the poor in our community, but also by being understanding and accepting towards all people, especially those who share different opinions and viewpoints from us.

We seek always to be found with a clean heart, a heart that is not stained by sin, but that is inscribed with the Word of God.

A clean heart is a true, honorable, just, pure, and a loving heart.

We all desire to live in peace in some sense.

And to do so is to foster and create peace and reconciliation with our neighbors, ourselves, and with God.

We realize that there are times in our lives when we will encounter persecution because we are holy or strive to be holy.

In other words, when we seek to be true to Jesus and fully live our vocation that God has given us, there are times when we will encounter persecution from others.

And enduring these persecutions will grant us the kingdom of God.

All in all, we are already promised the kingdom of God because if we think about it, at least one or more of these characteristics and values describe us and our life.

Thus, God's kingdom is not for a select few.

Rather, God's kingdom is available to all who are open and accepting of these characteristics and values that are a part of every day living.

And naturally, living these characteristics and values requires faith and hope in the living God, the same faith and hope that all the saints believed in and practiced in their lives when they lived these same characteristics and values.

So, by embracing these qualities, we are joining the communion of the saints who have already paved the way for us.

May we remember them, mirror their lives, and ask for their intercession for us as we strive to live these characteristics and values in our lives as they did in theirs.

May we also remember that which separates a saint from a non-saint.

A saint is someone who when “circumstances arise...that call for heroism – where no compromise is tolerable:” the saint “stays true to Jesus Christ whatever the cost in terms of reputation, life or possessions,” rather than denying him.

May we strive to be a saint.