

The first words of Jesus in today's Gospel are shocking.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

Blessed are the mourners.

Blessed are the meek.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Blessed are the persecuted.

The world does not speak like this.

The world says:

blessed are the successful,

the powerful,

the admired,

the comfortable.

But Jesus stands on the mountain and completely overturns worldly thinking.

Because He is describing not worldly success,
but the soul that belongs to God.

And perhaps the key to understanding the Beatitudes is this:

Jesus is describing Himself.

He is poor in spirit.

He is meek.

He mourns over sin.

He is merciful.

Pure of heart.

Persecuted for righteousness.

The Beatitudes are the face of Christ.

And therefore they are also the shape of Christian holiness.

Then we hear in the first reading about Elijah.

Suddenly he appears like a storm.

Fearless before a corrupt king and a nation turning away from God.

Israel had begun worshipping false gods.
The people wanted religion on their own terms.

And Elijah stands almost alone speaking the truth.

That takes courage.

Because holiness has never depended on following the crowd.

And perhaps that matters enormously now.

The Beatitudes sound beautiful when embroidered on cards or painted on walls.

But they are radical.

To be merciful in a cruel world.

To stay pure in a corrupted world.

To hunger for holiness in a distracted world.

To remain faithful when faith becomes unpopular.

That requires strength.

And yet Jesus calls these people blessed.

Why?

Because they belong to the Kingdom of Heaven already.

The Beatitudes reveal what a soul looks like when God truly reigns within it.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

This does not mean pretending poverty is pleasant.

It means recognising our need for God.

The spiritually proud soul says:

“I am enough.”

The poor in spirit say:

“Lord, I need You.”

And strangely,
that humility opens the soul to grace.

“Blessed are those who mourn.”

Not despairing people.

But people whose hearts are still capable of sorrow over sin,
suffering,
and the brokenness of the world.

The saints never became cold-hearted.

The closer they came to Christ,
the more deeply they loved.

“Blessed are the pure in heart.”

Purity is deeply unfashionable now.

The modern world treats impurity casually,
almost as entertainment.

But Jesus says purity allows a person to see God.

Because sin clouds the soul.

Purity brings clarity.

And then perhaps the hardest beatitude of all:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness.”

The saints understood this well.

Elijah understood it.

The apostles understood it.

Faithfulness to God will sometimes cost something.

Perhaps not imprisonment or death for most of us.

But misunderstanding.

Mockery.

Loneliness.

Being thought strange for taking the Faith seriously.

And Christ says:
Do not be afraid.

The Kingdom belongs to such souls.

Then there is one final detail in today's readings that matters deeply.

God sends Elijah into the wilderness, and ravens feed him there.

It is such a strange image.

The prophet survives because God Himself provides for him.

And perhaps many faithful Catholics today sometimes feel isolated,
small, or discouraged.

But God does not abandon those who belong to Him.

He sustained Elijah.
He sustained the saints.
He sustains the Church still.

The Beatitudes are not impossible ideals.

They are the life of grace slowly transforming the human soul.

And holiness usually grows quietly.

Daily prayer.
Daily patience.
Daily repentance.
Daily trust in God.

That is how saints are made.

And perhaps today Our Lord asks us something simple:

Which voice shapes my life more deeply —
the voice of the world,
or the voice of Christ?

Because the world praises comfort and self-interest.

Christ praises holiness. And only one of those voices leads to eternal life.