

***“Blessed... blessed ... blessed...” (Mt 5,1.12)***

**CALLED TO HAPPINESS AND HOLINESS TODAY**

**HOMILY FOR FIRST PROFESSION OF FMA - SEC**

**(Is 51,9-11; Col 3,12-17; Mt 5, 1-12a)**

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am really happy to preside this Eucharist of the First Profession of Sr Juliana Alfonso, FMA, Sr Jessica Casillo, FMA, Sr Pamela Rose Suresca, FMA. It is really something very wonderful to see young women like you surrender totally to God, the only One who deserves all what you are. In this Eucharist we will invoke the Holy Spirit asking Him to be your light and your strength in your vocation to follow radically Jesus. It's what you have wanted to communicate by choosing the readings we have just heard: "I rejoice heartily in the Lord. In my God is the joy of my soul for he has ... wrapped me in a mantle of justice like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels"; and the Beatitudes, which are the Magna Charter of the Kingdom, an amazing program of happiness and holiness. It is very interesting that the word "Beatitude" means both things: happiness and holiness. It doesn't wonder if Dominic Savio said: "Here, we make consist holiness in being always happy".

### ***August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1972***

But first I like to invite you to remember the story in which you will be involved starting from this day!

It was 5 August 1872 when, with the first professions, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was born.

It is a day of remembrance and a day of future, it's a day of memory and a day of prophecy, as it was on August 5, 1872 in Mornese. Day of gratitude and faithfulness.

Sure of being guided by God's fidelity, open your gaze and your heart to hope and "revive" the gift of the Salesian vocation.

August 5<sup>th</sup> is an opportunity to return to the evangelical and charismatic sources, to the motivations that give meaning to life and that come from the heart.

August 5<sup>th</sup> is an event of grace in which the roots of one's calling can be found in greater depth.

The solemn feast of August 5 is lived by remembering the story that God has woven with each one, making you aware that you are called to tell it and make it happen, day after day, in the certainty that each one is indispensable for the story to be more original and fuller of novelty.

A story to be lived as protagonists, with and for young people, represented with the testimony of a joyful fidelity that arouses questions of meaning, and which becomes a challenge and an inspiration for other young women like you.

The renewal of the Covenant of love with God is a further sign that your life is an uninterrupted praise of the Father's mercy, marked by the commitment to live the beatitudes, as you will say in the prayer of your Profession:

«In response to your love, I undertake to radically live the beatitudes of the Kingdom in communion with the sisters by announcing Christ to young men and women»

You know that God loved you first, but you will be truly blessed, happy, only if you enter into the divine logic of gift, into the bliss of those who welcome and bear witness to the mercy of the Father, the beating heart of the Gospel.

The celebration of August 5 is an occasion to make love for Our Lady grow. Don Bosco chose Main and her companions to live an intense love for Mary and become "*a living monument of his gratitude*".

Where there is Mary there is a future and Don Bosco focuses on the future.

***“Blessed, blessed, blessed... for yours is the kingdom of heaven”***

And as usual it is the Word of God that illuminates what we celebrate. So your first profession is illuminated by the Beatitudes of the Kingdom.

The beatitudes, with which Jesus starts His preaching of the Kingdom of God, are truly His “Magna Charta”. And we can but wonder and be thankful for the fact that Jesus introduces the Kingdom with a program of happiness, as it is actually this that the Father wants for all His sons and daughters: that they be happy and reach the fulness of life and of love. You have here, my dear Sisters, “the ideal of an evangelical life”, “an answer to the thirst of God and of happiness”, “a journey to reach it”, “the logic of the Kingdom”, all things which you have chosen for you.

The beatitudes have been considered by all Christian generations, and particularly by the religious communities, as the best synthesis of the Gospel of Christ, His most fascinating announcement. Jesus, in fact, presents His Gospel as a program of happiness, and through it, it offers us a full realization in God. But this message can only be welcomed and understood through faith, which implies a profound capsizing, an overturning of our value hierarchy, of the logic of the world, and last, a change of the image we have of God.

These words of Jesus seem too utopic, and we find it very hard to take them seriously. Who seriously believes that the poor, the sufferings, the hungry and the persecuted are happy? Let us ask them! What benefits one gets in trying to be pure of heart or merciful? It is enough to think of the billions of people who can hardly live, while others increase all kinds of wealth! Our own daily experience seems, at times, a clear witness against the statements of Jesus. Yet, this was the first promise Jesus of Nazareth made when He began speaking of God and His Lordship.

It is interesting to note, in both Luke and Matthew, a preamble and a framework of a programmatic speech of Jesus (“Speech of the plain”, in Luke, and “Speech of the mountain”, in Matthew). The intention is clear: for the Kingdom citizens, joy is an imperative, the happiness of God comes before the demands of the Kingdom of God. For Jesus, only the establishment of the divine Lordship will be able to bring beatitude: joy on the earth distressed by poverty, sufferings, death, and to plant it in man’s hearts. Moreover, this happiness could be lived in any kind of human situations, no matter how wretched it may be. Just there, where there are no reasons at all to be happy, God comes and promises gladness and makes it possible.

Therefore, it is not Alice in Wonderland, but the Kingdom, which transforms the lives of those who welcome it right now.

Here is the *first consequence*: to believe heartily in the promise of God means to become citizens of His Kingdom and listeners of Jesus on the mountain of the beatitudes. God begins reigning where the happy promise begins realizing. We are, therefore, called to make happiness our life programme, *to profess joy as a daily lifestyle*. Isn't this in tune with the most authentic salesian traditions: "We make sanctity consist in being always cheerful"?

In Jesus's words the beatitudes were a proclamation of the kingdom, addressed, in the first place, to the poor, to those marginalized and excluded from the wealth of this world, to the oppressed. Also today, in a more and more secularized world, who has decided not to count on God, to do without Him; these very people, these who do not count for the world, who today are reduced to objects and waste material, these very people will be able to wait for God and His Lordship. Their happiness depends on God, because God Himself is their happiness. This should be our gospel, the good news to be lived and spread. Here is the *second consequence*: God approaches those who are in need of Him. His Kingdom comes only and exclusively for those who are waiting for it.

Happiness promised by Jesus were not just words. Jesus made of the beatitudes, His own programme of life and live it during His public ministry. He had come to announce this messianic joy, and He proclaimed it living it; in this way He manifested also His most intimate religious experience. Jesus was able to speak of God, because such was the way He lived God: a God who makes those who believe in Him happy.

Here, then, is the *third consequence*: we should *announce what we live*, communicating to others our experience of God with our lives. Just like Jesus, Who in the beatitudes revealed His own experience of God. He lived what He announced, as He believed in what He preached, He worked what He proclaimed with His own hands.

Jesus interpreted and explained the logic of the Kingdom of God because He lived it. All His life, from His humble birth to His tragic death, He lived the attitudes of the beatitudes: He was poor (2 Cor 8, 9), meek and humble of heart (Mt 11, 29), He was hungry (Mt 4, 2), and thirsty (Jn 4, 7; 19, 28), He experienced persecution for the kingdom (Mt 10, 16-24). The beatitudes were His type of life, before being words on His lips. Without Him, the beatitudes would be simply a paradox, a word-game, a crazy utopia, out of reality and without any guarantee of truth. Therefore, the beatitudes imply the necessity to know Jesus. He knew whom and what He was speaking about, when He proclaimed them. This is the *fourth consequence*: to know the deep root of the joy of Jesus, we need *to discover the reason of His life*: God and His Kingdom.

In the beatitudes, Jesus offers us His vision of the world, of man, and, above all, of God. He neither imposes a new law on us, nor exhorts us to behave in a particular way. He shows us some basic attitudes, which can generate powerful energies and

produce surprising behaviors, revealing new goals. With the beatitudes as a prologue to His announcing of the kingdom of God, Jesus proposes us a way to make our own His experience of God: live with little, without lacking the joy of having God as our God; counting on God, when we do not count for the world; facing our own limits and death itself, without renouncing the gladness to have Him as our God. This is the way to make our own the experience of Jesus.

In the cross we can see the true image of God, who is committed to our happiness, and the paradox of His Lordship is enlightened. Dear sisters, in the cross of Jesus we find the reason of our joy. The cross of Christ defends our happiness from every attempt to conquer it easily. The Resurrection has been, and continues to be, God's answer to men and women who decide to live according to the evangelical beatitudes.

Jesus wants his disciples to make the Sermon on the Mount a programme of life: meekness, poverty, freely giving, mercy, pardon, abandonment to God, trust, doing to others what we would have done to ourselves, here are the Gospel works that have to shine out, those that become "*salt*" and "*light*", that help create that alternative society that will prevent society from becoming completely rotten.

By living the Beatitudes as Jesus lived them, You, dear Sisters, not only will be 'Blessed', i.e., happy and holy, but also you will be light of the world and salt of the earth, a reflection of the holiness of Jesus and builders of the Kingdom.

May Mary Help of Christians teach you to become true disciples of Jesus, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Haledon,  
August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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*Fr Pascual Chávez V., SDB*