

Quotes for Class 3

Sermon on the Mount

a. *Who is the Audience?*

The Sermon on the Mount is addressed to the entire world, the entire present and future, and yet it demands *discipleship* and can be understood and lived out only by following Jesus and accompanying him on his journey (Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 69).

b. **The Beatitudes** are promises resplendent with the new image of the world and of man inaugurated by Jesus, his “transformation of values.” They are eschatological promises. This must not, however, be taken to mean that the joy they proclaim is postponed until some infinitely remote future or applies exclusively to the next world. When man begins to see and to live from God’s perspective, when he is a companion of Jesus’ way, then he lives by new standards, and something of the *eschaton*, of the reality to come, is already present. Jesus brings joy into the midst of affliction (*JN*, 72).

c. The beatitudes stand opposed to our spontaneous sense of existence, our hunger and thirst for life. **They demand “conversion”** –that we inwardly turn around to go in the opposite direction from the one we would spontaneously like to go in. But this U-turn brings what is pure and noble to the fore and gives a proper ordering to our lives (*JN*, 98).

d. *Do as I say and as I do*

Behind the Sermon on the Mount stands the figure of Christ, the man who is God, but who, precisely because he is God, descends, empties himself, all the way to death on the cross. The saints, from Paul through Francis of Assisi down to Mother Teresa, have lived out this option and have thereby shown us the correct image of man and his happiness. In a word, the true morality of Christianity is love. And love does admittedly run counter to self seeking- it is an exodus out of oneself, and yet this is precisely the way in which man comes to himself. Compared with the tempting luster of Nietzsche’s image of man, this way seems at first wretched, and thoroughly unreasonable. But it is the real high road of life; it is only on the way of love, whose paths are described in the Sermon on Mount, that the richness of life and the greatness of man’s calling are opened up (*JN*, 99).

e. *Why we need to be taught how to pray*

But the converse is also true: Praying actualizes and deepens our communion of being with God. Our praying can and should rise above all from our heart, from our needs, our hopes, our joys, our sufferings, from our shame over sin, and from our gratitude for the good. It can and should be a holy personal prayer. But we also constantly need to make use of those prayers that express in words the encounter with God experienced both by the Church as a whole and by individual members of the Church. For without these aids to prayer, our own praying and our image of God becomes subjective and end up reflecting ourselves more than the living God (*JN*, 130).

f. **The Our Father** begins with a great consolation: we are allowed to say ‘Father.’ This one word contains the whole history of redemption. We are allowed to say ‘Father’ because the son was our brother and has revealed the father to us; because, thanks to what Christ has done, we have once more become children of God” (*Das Vaterunser* page 10). It is true, of course, that contemporary men and women have difficulty experiencing the great consolation of the word *Father* immediately, since the experience of the father is in many cases either completely absent or is obscured by inadequate examples of fatherhood.

We must therefore let Jesus teach us what *father* really means. In Jesus’ discourses the Father appears as the source of all good, as the measure of the rectitude (perfection) of man (*JN*, 136).

- g. Through him, and only through him, do we come to know the Father. And in this way the criterion of true fatherliness is made clear. The Our Father does not project a human image onto heaven but shows us from heaven- from Jesus- what we as human beings can and should be like (*JN*, 137).
- h. What is important, what is within our reach, is to live in God's presence and make good use of the moment: Do your duty 'now', without looking back on 'yesterday', which has already passed, or worrying over 'tomorrow' which may never come for you (St. Josemaria Escriva, *The Way*, 253).

Who talks like this?

- i. The authority with which Jesus speaks in these verses reveals him as sovereign Judge of the living and the dead. No Old Testament prophet ever spoke with this authority (Navarre Bible commentary on Mt 7:21-23).
- j. If Jesus does not speak with the full authority of the Son, if his interpretation is not the beginning of a new communion in a new, free obedience, then there is only one alternative: Jesus is enticing us to disobedience against God's commandment (*JN*, 120).
- k. **On Matt 11:12**
 "This violence is not directed against others. It is a violence used to fight your own weaknesses and miseries, a fortitude, which prevents you from camouflaging your own infidelities, a boldness to own up to the faith even when the environment is hostile" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, 82).
- l. Mt 12:31
Why is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit unforgivable? How should this blasphemy be understood? St. Thomas Aquinas replies that it is a question of a sin that is "unforgivable by its very nature, insofar as it excludes the elements through which the forgiveness of sin takes place."¹⁸³

According to such an exegesis, "blasphemy" does not properly consist in offending against the Holy Spirit in words; it consists rather in the refusal to accept the salvation which God offers to man through the Holy Spirit, working through the power of the Cross. If man rejects the "convincing concerning sin" which comes from the Holy Spirit and which has the power to save, he also rejects the "coming" of the Counselor-that "coming" which was accomplished in the Paschal Mystery, in union with the redemptive power of Christ's Blood: the Blood which "purifies the conscience from dead works."

...And the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit consists precisely in the radical refusal to accept this forgiveness, of which he is the intimate giver and which presupposes the genuine conversion which he brings about in the conscience. If Jesus says that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven either in this life or in the next, it is because this "non-forgiveness" is linked, as to its cause, to "non-repentance," in other words to the radical refusal to be converted. JP II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 46.