

Session 6: The Pure in Heart

What We Found

The sixth beatitude carries the promise the whole ascent aims at. The heart in Scripture is the control room of the person, so purity of heart is undividedness: one throne, one occupant, in the three arenas of CCC 2518 (charity, chastity, love of the truth). We climbed Psalm 24's hill of the LORD ("clean hands and a pure heart") and felt the shock of the promise: the vision Moses was refused (Exodus 33:20) is pledged to the pure, with a real foretaste now and the beatific vision itself face to face in glory (1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2-3). Purity is not achieved but created ("create in me a clean heart," Psalm 51:10): God does not merely excuse hearts; he re-creates them, and the saints are the proof.

Voices of the Church

ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA · HOMILIES ON THE BEATITUDES

St. Gregory of Nyssa, preaching on this beatitude, teaches in substance that the promise seems at first to exceed human nature (how can creatures see the invisible God?), and answers with an image: as a purified mirror holds an image of the sun, so the heart scoured of sin finds the image of God restored in itself, and in that restored image truly sees him. Purity does not shrink the soul's vision; it is the polishing that makes vision possible.

Application (ours, not the saint's): everything the ascent stripped away (grasping, numbness, vengeance, false food, hardness) turns out to have been grime on the mirror.

ST. AUGUSTINE · CONFESSIONS X.27

"Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new; late have I loved you!" (Wording varies slightly by translation.) St. Augustine's most famous cry after the restless heart is this one, and it continues: you were within me, and I was outside, hunting through the beautiful things you made. His divided years were not a search for the wrong object but in the wrong direction: the Beauty was interior, waiting behind the noise.

Application (ours, not the saint's): impurity of heart is not usually loving bad things; it is loving good things in God's chair.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS · SUMMA THEOLOGIAE I, Q. 12; I-II, Q. 3, A. 8

St. Thomas Aquinas, treating how God can be known, teaches in substance that the created intellect can, by God's grace and not by nature, be raised to see the very essence of God, and that this vision is the creature's final happiness: the mind's long hunger (Session 4's hunger) coming to its table. What no eye has seen, God has prepared; the light of glory will strengthen the intellect for a sight it could never reach alone.

Thomas turns the beatitude's promise into precise hope: seeing God is not a metaphor. It is the point of everything.

Live It This Week

- Memorize Matthew 5:8; recite 5:3-8 each morning.
- Make a throne-room inventory in prayer this week: fifteen unhurried minutes asking, "Lord, what shares your chair?" Write down what surfaces.

- Go to confession this month; take the inventory with you. If it has been years, say exactly that to the priest; he has heard it before and will help.
- Read Matthew 5:9 before Session 7: the ascent continues and turns outward: peacemakers.

Memory Verse · Matthew 5:8

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Catechism References

CCC 1720, 2518-2519; on the beatific vision, 1023, 1028

Before Next Session

Read Matthew 5:9 before Session 7: the ascent continues and turns outward: peacemakers.