POOR IN SPIRIT

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

This is the first of the Beatitudes which Jesus taught his disciples. It is the first and perhaps the most important. I have been reflecting on what it really means. What is it to be poor in spirit? To me, poor means to be without; to lack something. To be financially poor is to have little or no money; to have very few material possessions; to be homeless and to lack the basic necessities such as food and clothing. To be poor in health is to have an illness or a disability and to be in need of medication; to lack the means to do what healthy people are able to do. So, what does it mean to be poor in spirit?

Perhaps it is an awareness of our absolute dependence on God; a realisation that without God, we are nothing. There is nothing I have that God has not granted to me. There is no good thing that I can do which God has not provided the ability, the means and the opportunity to do. He gave me life, freely and lovingly. His love is beyond human comprehension, limitless and endless; infinite. God trusts us to love him and to use our lives to share that love with others. He also gave us freedom to accept or reject. If we reject his love, we are wasting that life by burying it in our own pride and self-indulgence.

I think that unless we are poor in spirit we are unable to benefit from the other beatitudes. They are promises Jesus gave us. When we mourn, we are suffering the loss of a person who we have loved but we are comforted knowing that dear one is now in God's loving and merciful care, but I think it is deeper than that. We are all sinners and continually step off the path that God has laid before us, but He is a merciful god and never ceases to call us back and to show us the right way. We have only to listen deeply and to see and understand where He is leading us. Jesus told us how great is the celebration in heaven when one who has strayed and then found again and brought back to the fold. To mourn is a feeling of sadness and regret. To acknowledge our previous mistakes, to be truly sorry for all the times we have offended God and to be determined never to offend him again. By His birth, death and resurrection, Jesus has made reconciliation possible.

We are entering Advent, a time of preparation. I will try to prepare myself for his coming by reflecting deeply on all the promises Jesus gave us and try to understand their meaning.

O Lord, you have given me so much

And I have so little to give to you.

I have only myself,

All that I am, all that I have, all that I do.

But I am weak, timid, sinful.

Give me the wisdom to know the right thing to do

And the courage to dedicate my life to you.