



Ambassadors of a
WORLDWIDE BROTHERHOOD

MEDITATION 2 (August 6, 2011)

We pay a visit to Delft. We are talking specifically about the works of mercy. The group at Delft is called M25. We reflect on the Gospel text from which the group got its name.

- **Lectio: Matthew 25: 31 – 47**

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne,
32 and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
33 He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.
34 Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.
35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me,
36 naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'
37 Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?
38 When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?
39 When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?'
40 And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'
41 Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,
43 a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.'
44 Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?'
45 He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.'
46 And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

- **Meditatio**

This text is based on the last sermon of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. The sermon contains a series of parables about the arrival of the Son of Man. At the beginning of Chapter 24 the disciples ask Jesus the following questions: Do tell us when all this will happen and indicate to us which sign will announce your second coming and declare that the end of this world is near.

Jesus quite frankly says to them that only the Father knows the time and hour of this. And then He tells them a number of parables which prepare the reader to understand the various criteria which are going to be relevant for the Last Judgment.

All these parables function as mirrors for each disciple to reflect on his own actions or lack thereof. An ever returning refrain here is: Be vigilant. It is indeed an important point for each and every Christian to be vigilant in all matters: how do we interact with our fellow humans; how do we study Holy Scripture; how do we make use of the gifts we have received.

The parable which we are reading now is the end of Jesus' speech. The other parables tell about the return of someone who did leave his own place. They are stated in everyday language and use common symbols. In this last comparison Jesus tells about the Last Judgment. It is all about the power and the glory. Thus there are legal cases, including the final judgment: a given group may look forward to eternal life, while another group can expect eternal punishment. Although there is also a sentence in the creed about the final judgment (He will come to judge the living and the dead), still we do have quite some problems with this. Jesus Who came to save, is coming here to pass judgment. How that is supposed to happen, I rather leave up to God. I do not have to pass judgment. What I can do, is present them a mirror: What do you make of your life? What do you do with the gifts you did receive? Also Jesus hands us a mirror.

The six works of mercy in this comparison function as a mirror with respect to the Beatitudes which open the Sermon on the Mount (first address) of Jesus (cf. Matthew 5). The Beatitudes are also a mirror for each human being. They present, so to say, eight groups. By asking yourself to which group you belong, an awareness of your own life comes about. The same is true for the works of mercy. Where the Beatitudes call the human being to account with respect to his attitude (humble of heart, etc.), the works of mercy focus on our actions. Quite interesting and clear in both series is the statement that the human being need not overstrain him/herself to do what is good. The Beatitudes do not ask too much of a human being, but rather point out what keeps him/her busy. With regard to the parable of the works of mercy, the responses of those to the right of the king clearly show that they were not aware of their own actions. They did what was good without thinking about it. Beautiful is Jesus' statement that, in each person in need, we meet the Son of Man Himself. He reveals Himself in the sick person, the prisoner, etc. Frequently we ask the Lord Jesus to be merciful (Kyrie eleison, Lord have mercy). Jesus asks his disciples to do what they ask of Him: showing mercy. And showing mercy is being merciful. Jesus asks us to live mercifully.

When dealing with the parallels regarding the Beatitudes and the works of mercy, automatically another question of Jesus comes to the fore: what do you do with the Gospel? Do you listen to it in your own actions? Do you celebrate the Gospel message with others? Do you practise the Gospel? At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, we find the following call: only those who do the will of My Father will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21). What is the will of the heavenly Father? That always remains the question. In my view, the answer is simple: read the Beatitudes and the works of mercy yet once again.