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Holocaust Memorial Day is coming up next month. It is over 60 years since the liberation of Auschwitz by the Russians. On occasions like this the question resurfaces. What perverted the minds of so many people which led to death camps like Auschwitz? It is undeniable that the philosophy of Nietzsche - a German philosopher, who died in 1900, had a bearing on the Holocaust. It also has a massive influence on people's thinking today.

Life, according to Nietzsche, is for the sleek and powerful. The fittest should rise to the top; those at the bottom should be dismissed from living. God is dead. Christianity is the one immortal blemish on mankind. He scoffed at the teaching of the beatitudes, the content of today's Gospel. He said they were prescriptions for sheep and slaves. According to him the imperial self is not accountable to God or any moral authority. Self justification, not the salvation which comes from God is the one important thing. This philosophy of life, as we can see, runs directly counter to the teachings of Jesus in the beatitudes.

The beatitudes are an attempt to describe the true meaning of happiness and the type of people who will inherit the Kingdom of God. The happiness described is more than feeling good about ourselves or the pleasure we get from a job well done. During his trial Jesus said to Pilate: 'My Kingdom is not of this world'. Well the happiness of the beatitudes transcends what this world with all its delights and attractions and rewards has to offer.

Fundamental to the idea of happiness in the Gospel is an unbounded dependence on God through all the vicissitudes of life. The happiness which Jesus offers is not at the mercy of feelings or individual tastes. You will not be devoid of inner peace even when your Christian beliefs causes you to be slighted by family or friends. In the last two beatitudes, for instance, happiness comes as a result of persecution and abuse suffered in the name of Christ. The beatitudes will seem to go against man's natural desire for independence which makes him, and him alone, the master of his life and destiny. Their message is that man is not at the centre of everything but God. We own our existence to Him. Our ultimate destiny lies in His hands.

The common denominator of those who are termed 'blessed' is a humble acceptance of one's earthly condition. 'Humility' comes from the Latin word 'humus' which means 'of the earth'. We are of the earth, we are

not God. Adam and Eve tried to dethrone God and we're all suffering as a result of their Original Sin. In future when we examine your consciences before confession, let us not limit ourselves to the Ten Commandments but apply the eight beatitudes to ourselves as well. It might be quite revealing.

When we live the beatitudes we're leaving 'middle of the road Christianity' behind and taking on more earnestly the mind of Christ.

Nietzsche's philosophy influenced the minds of those who later became architects of the holocaust and the death camps. Christ's philosophy upholds our human dignity as children of God and our creaturely dependence on Him and brings abundant life both here and in the hereafter.