

Vance and Constantine: Rulers of Falling Empires With Ordo Amoris

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This paper examines the political and theological parallels between Vice President JD Vance’s use of *Ordo Amoris*—the Augustinian doctrine of “rightly ordered love”—and Emperor Constantine’s strategic integration of Christianity into the Roman state. Both figures arise during moments of imperial decline and respond to social fragmentation by invoking theology as a means of restoring order and legitimacy. While *Ordo Amoris* has historically provided a framework for prioritizing moral obligations, its use in defense of exclusionary policies—such as mass deportation—raises profound ethical questions. In contrast, the Beatitudes, spoken by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, call for a radical, indiscriminate love that lifts up the poor, the meek, and the marginalized. This paper argues that when rulers use theology to protect power rather than to reflect divine grace, the Church is faced with a moral decision: to align with empire or to return to the revolutionary ethic of Christ. Through historical analysis and theological critique, we explore how love, misordered in times of crisis, can serve not the Kingdom of God, but the ambitions of Caesar.

Keywords: JD Vance, Constantine, Ordo Amoris, Beatitudes, Augustine, Aquinas, theology and politics, Christian ethics, nationalism, immigration, imperial decline, Pope Francis, radical grace, church and state, prophetic Christianity, theological misuse, Christian nationalism, moral hierarchy, love and power, American empire. A collaboration with GPT-4o. CC4.0.

1. Introduction: Love and Power at the Edge of Collapse

Throughout history, the language of love has been wielded not only in the personal and spiritual realm, but also in the political. The tension arises when theological principles—born in contexts of humility, suffering, and moral reflection—are co-opted by those in power to justify actions that preserve the state, protect institutional authority, and suppress dissent. This dynamic is not new. It occurred in the twilight of the Roman Empire, and it is happening again in the twilight of American hegemony.

In recent years, American political discourse has seen the emergence of figures who invoke theological concepts with surprising fluency. One such figure is Vice President JD Vance, who has appealed to the doctrine of *Ordo Amoris*, the “order of love” articulated by St. Augustine and further refined by Thomas Aquinas, to defend policies of mass deportation and national preference. By claiming that Americans should love their fellow citizens before extending compassion to migrants or refugees, Vance reframes a theological concept of moral prioritization into a political tool for exclusion.

This use of *Ordo Amoris* is striking not only for its content, but for its context. The American empire, like Rome in the 4th century, is in a state of visible decline. Cultural fragmentation, economic instability, and political polarization have weakened the structures of unity and coherence. Just as Constantine the Great employed Christianity to consolidate imperial power amid chaos, modern leaders like Vance turn to theological reasoning to shore up the legitimacy of the state. In both cases, theological language is placed in the service of political survival rather than prophetic truth.

This paper argues that *Ordo Amoris*, when invoked by rulers of declining empires, becomes a theology of containment. It is used not to expand the reach of divine love, but to contract it—narrowing moral concern to the boundaries of the nation, the tribe, or the institution. In doing so, it betrays the heart of Christian teaching as embodied in the Beatitudes, where the poor, the meek, the peacemakers, and the persecuted are called “blessed,” and where love is not rationed according to

nearness or utility, but poured out freely without regard to social or national distinction.

This is not merely a theological disagreement. It is a clash of visions—between a faith rooted in hierarchy and a kingdom built on grace. And it is a conflict that will shape the moral trajectory of the Church and the state alike in an age of unraveling certainties.

2. Ordo Amoris: The Architecture of Moral Order

The concept of *Ordo Amoris*—the “order of love”—originated with St. Augustine of Hippo, who lived during one of the most tumultuous periods in Western history. As the Roman Empire crumbled under the weight of internal corruption and external invasion, Augustine sought to articulate a Christian response to the social, political, and moral chaos engulfing the world he knew. In his seminal work *The City of God*, Augustine made a sharp distinction between the City of Man, governed by pride and disordered love, and the City of God, oriented toward true love of God and neighbor. According to Augustine, sin arises not necessarily from loving the wrong things, but from loving the right things in the wrong order.

This became the foundation of *Ordo Amoris*: the idea that there is a divinely ordained hierarchy of love, and moral failure stems from disrupting that order. Love of God must come first, then love of self in relation to God, then love of neighbor, and finally love of the broader world. The proximity of relationship and the depth of moral obligation determine the priority of love. One’s duty to one’s family, for example, outweighs one’s duty to strangers. In a collapsing empire, this concept was not just theological—it was existential. *Ordo Amoris* offered a stable, rational structure amid civilizational breakdown.

Thomas Aquinas later expanded this framework into a systematic moral philosophy. Aquinas, writing in the scholastic era of the 13th century, integrated *Ordo Amoris* into his broader synthesis of Aristotelian ethics and Christian doctrine. For Aquinas, love (*caritas*) is an act of the will ordered toward the good, and it should be expressed in accordance with natural and divine law. The concept

of rightly ordered love became a moral architecture, underpinning not just personal piety but societal organization. Aquinas's version of *Ordo Amoris* provided rulers and theologians with a justification for prioritizing certain relationships and obligations over others—not arbitrarily, but in the name of cosmic order.

For those in power, *Ordo Amoris* holds enormous appeal. It affirms the legitimacy of loving and protecting those closest to oneself—first God, then kin, then one's nation, and only afterward the foreigner or stranger. It allows for moral preference without guilt, and it offers a structure for defending national and familial loyalty as not merely instinctive, but divinely sanctioned. In this context, the command to “love your neighbor” is not universal in scope but conditional on one's relative obligations. While this interpretation may provide moral clarity for those seeking to preserve social cohesion, it also opens the door for exclusionary policies disguised as theological responsibility.

This is precisely how Vice President JD Vance has employed *Ordo Amoris* in contemporary American politics. Amid rising concern over immigration, cultural fragmentation, and perceived threats to national identity, Vance has appealed to *Ordo Amoris* to justify policies of mass deportation and the prioritization of American citizens over asylum seekers and migrants. In his view, Christians are not called to universal charity in the abstract, but to ordered love that begins at home. By invoking this theological concept, Vance reframes what might otherwise be seen as harsh or uncharitable policies as acts of fidelity to a higher moral structure.

Yet this application of *Ordo Amoris* strips the concept of its original spiritual intent. Augustine and Aquinas both assumed that love must ultimately reflect God's own expansive mercy. But in Vance's hands—and in the hands of many political leaders throughout history—*Ordo Amoris* becomes a boundary-setting device: a way to rationalize who deserves compassion and who does not. It shifts the focus from self-sacrificial love to self-protective order, from Christ-like openness to community-preserving hierarchy.

Thus, what began as a theological meditation on how best to love in a fallen world has, under the weight of political necessity, become a tool for moral gatekeeping in service of empire.

3. The Beatitudes: A Theology of Radical Grace

If *Ordo Amoris* represents a theology of moral structure and prioritization, the Beatitudes represent a revolutionary theology of divine reversal—where the expected order of the world is not just questioned but entirely overturned. Spoken by Jesus at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3–12), the Beatitudes do not merely describe who is “blessed”; they *redefine* the concept of blessedness itself. In doing so, they offer a vision of the Kingdom of God that cuts directly against the grain of both ancient empire and modern politics.

Jesus begins not with the strong, the righteous, or the influential, but with the poor in spirit. He blesses not the conquerors but the meek. He honors not the lawgivers or philosophers, but the peacemakers, the merciful, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. This is not simply a poetic gesture—it is a theological reorientation. The Beatitudes declare that God’s favor rests not with those in positions of power, but with those who are empty enough to receive grace, broken enough to welcome healing, and humble enough to abandon self-justification.

In this sense, the Beatitudes are not about *order* but about grace—and a grace that is radical in its inclusiveness and offensive to the hierarchies of the world. Jesus does not ask if the poor are deserving; He calls them blessed. He does not inquire whether the persecuted are within one’s national boundaries; He affirms their place in the Kingdom of Heaven. There is no appeal to proximity, responsibility, or strategic love—only the divine impulse to embrace the least, the last, and the lost. Where *Ordo Amoris* builds a staircase of moral obligation, the Beatitudes fling open the gates to anyone willing to come with nothing.

This radical inclusivity has always posed a challenge to institutional religion and political power alike. To bless the poor and the persecuted is to stand in

opposition to wealth and violence. To elevate the meek is to rebuke the proud. To honor the peacemakers is to critique the warmakers. And to bless those who are reviled and excluded is to stand against systems that enforce exclusion as a means of order. The Beatitudes, therefore, are not a spiritual comfort for the comfortable—they are a moral provocation to the privileged.

In the modern era, Pope Francis has sought to recover this Beatitude-centered ethic in the face of rising nationalism, xenophobia, and the growing global gap between rich and poor. Repeatedly, he has warned against the Church being co-opted by political agendas that prioritize national security over human dignity. His consistent message has been that the Church must be a “field hospital” for the suffering—not a fortress for the righteous. When faced with political leaders who invoke theological principles like *Ordo Amoris* to justify excluding migrants, Francis responds not with policy critique but with Gospel proclamation: “Who is my neighbor?” is not a bureaucratic question but a spiritual one.

Francis’ emphasis on mercy, humility, and welcome is a direct application of the Beatitudes to our time. He speaks often of the “globalization of indifference” and calls the Church back to a Gospel of encounter, where the poor are not statistics but faces, and where the stranger is not a threat but a brother. In doing so, he places himself in the line of Jesus—not as an administrator of divine order, but as a witness to divine grace.

The Beatitudes remain a scandal to any system—religious, economic, or political—that seeks to prioritize its own safety over sacrificial love. They remind the Church that Christ did not come to uphold order but to fulfill it through mercy. They remind rulers that the Kingdom of God belongs not to those who govern, but to those who grieve.

4. From Constantine to Vance: The Empire’s Temptation

The story of Christianity’s rise to power is inseparable from the figure of Constantine the Great. Before Constantine, Christians were a persecuted minority—marginalized, underground, and defined by a radical ethic of self-

sacrificial love, nonviolence, and solidarity with the poor. After Constantine's conversion and the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, Christianity was no longer a threat to imperial stability—it became a pillar of empire. What began in the catacombs moved into the palaces. What had once been the creed of outcasts became the religion of emperors.

This shift was not purely theological—it was political necessity. Constantine faced a crumbling empire riddled with internal strife and external threats. He needed a unifying force that could bring together the fractured peoples of the Roman world. Christianity, with its universal message and growing moral authority, provided just that. But in adopting Christianity, Constantine subtly redefined it. The faith of martyrs and mystics was repurposed as a tool of imperial integration. The cross, once a symbol of Rome's cruelty, became an emblem of Rome's legitimacy.

It was in this context that theological constructs like *Ordo Amoris* took on renewed importance. Augustine, writing in the generation after Constantine, saw the chaos that still threatened the empire and sought a vision of moral order that could resist dissolution. *Ordo Amoris* offered a framework in which love could be *structured, prioritized, and controlled*. It was not just a path to personal sanctity; it became a blueprint for social stability. In this way, the Church's theology gradually evolved to reflect the needs of empire more than the cries of the poor.

Fast forward to the 21st century, and the parallels are hard to ignore. Vice President JD Vance, like Constantine before him, presides over a nation in crisis. The American project, once globally dominant, is fractured by political polarization, economic inequality, cultural conflict, and a growing sense of moral disorientation. In this context, Vance turns not to a new policy proposal but to an old theological principle: *Ordo Amoris*. Like Constantine, he seeks to preserve unity through hierarchy. He invokes theology not to challenge power, but to stabilize it.

By appealing to *Ordo Amoris*, Vance reasserts a vision of moral order that prioritizes the nation over the foreigner, the citizen over the refugee, the familiar over the unknown. It is a selective return to Augustine—not to his confessions of

humility and dependence on grace, but to his architecture of moral prioritization. Just as Constantine used Christianity to align spiritual and political authority, Vance uses *Ordo Amoris* to give divine weight to a nationalist ethic.

This pattern is not new. Institutional Christianity has often found itself tempted by power and proximity to empire. From the Holy Roman Empire to colonial Christendom, the Church has repeatedly compromised the radical message of the Gospel in order to participate in worldly influence. It has baptized violence, justified conquest, and blessed exclusion—all in the name of divine order. Saints who opposed empire from within—like Francis of Assisi, Oscar Romero, or Dorothy Day—have often been marginalized until long after their deaths. The Church's *instinct* has been to protect itself, and by extension, to protect the systems of authority that offer it security.

Yet in doing so, the Church risks betraying the very Christ it claims to follow—the Christ who refused to take up Caesar's sword, who called His followers to love their enemies, and who declared that the last would be first. Constantine's legacy is not merely historical—it is theological, and its echoes are still heard in the corridors of power. Vance's invocation of *Ordo Amoris* reveals that the temptation to marry Church and state, grace and control, is alive and well.

The question facing today's Church—and its leaders—is whether it will once again take the emperor's gold in exchange for silence, or whether it will return to the mountaintop where Jesus spoke of the poor, the merciful, and the persecuted as the true heirs of the Kingdom of God.

5. Who Deserves Our Love? Pope vs. the Unknown Poor

At the heart of the debate between *Ordo Amoris* and the Beatitudes lies a deceptively simple yet profoundly difficult question: Who deserves our love? It is not a question of whether we should love—for Christianity affirms love as its central command—but rather *how* we should love, and *whom* we should love first when our resources, attention, or allegiance are limited.

According to the logic of *Ordo Amoris*, love must be ordered, structured like a pyramid. At the top is God, and then descending through various layers: family, community, spiritual authorities, and finally, the stranger. In this model, obedience and affection flow upward through hierarchical channels, much like loyalty in a well-organized state. Loving the Pope, for example, is not only an act of personal admiration but a moral duty tied to one's alignment with the Church's authority. Loving one's bishop, priest, or even political leader may come before extending sacrificial love to someone unknown—especially if that person is outside the borders of the nation or the visible Church.

This model has clear internal consistency. It seeks to prevent moral chaos by establishing a priority of relationships. It presumes that proximity and responsibility increase moral urgency: I must feed my children before I feed a stranger's. I must defend my country before I rescue the foreigner. I must honor my spiritual leaders before I listen to the cries of the unchurched. But this very structure, though logical, can produce moral blindness. It can lead to a world in which compassion is reserved only for those within one's circle of obligation, and in which the suffering of the distant or unfamiliar is spiritually postponed—often indefinitely.

The Beatitudes offer a radically different answer. They upend the pyramid. They proclaim that the ones most worthy of love—indeed, the ones *blessed* by God—are the very people whom society places at the bottom: the poor, the meek, the merciful, the persecuted. In this view, love does not flow upward toward power or prestige. It flows downward to the forgotten, the neglected, and the despised. It is not rationed by hierarchy but poured out in grace, with no concern for social standing or theological credentials.

In the ethic of the Beatitudes, the unknown poor person on the street corner—or the nameless migrant at the border—is not a moral afterthought. He is *the face of Christ*. Jesus says in Matthew 25 that whatever we do “for the least of these,” we do for Him. The implication is stark: The measure of our faith is not how loyally we serve those above us in the religious hierarchy, but how extravagantly we love those beneath our notice.

This creates a theological and moral clash between *institutional allegiance* and *neighborly compassion*. The former often demands loyalty, trust, and emotional investment in abstract authority figures: bishops, popes, presidents, or parties. The latter requires immediacy, vulnerability, and inconvenience. Institutional allegiance is tidy—it operates in predefined roles and respects boundaries. Neighborly compassion is messy—it disrupts our routines, transcends categories, and often calls us to love people we are not supposed to.

When a Christian is forced to choose between defending the dignity of the Pope and defending the dignity of an undocumented worker—or between loyalty to a political leader invoking *Ordo Amoris* and love for a family being torn apart by deportation—the decision becomes a spiritual test. And the Beatitudes make the answer uncomfortably clear.

The true hierarchy in the Kingdom of God is not based on office, nation, or even theological correctness—it is based on need, humility, and openness to grace. In God’s economy, the last shall be first, and the unnamed, unseen poor person may be closer to the heart of Christ than any prelate or prince. That does not negate the need for reverence toward spiritual authority, but it redefines such reverence as worthless if it does not flow from a deeper compassion for the lowly.

The Church, and the faithful within it, must continually ask: Do we love the shepherd more than the sheep? Do we love the institution more than the Gospel? If the answer reveals a misordering of love, then *Ordo Amoris* has failed—and the Beatitudes beckon us back to the radical, inconvenient, and grace-filled path of Christ.

6. The Love of Money: The Hidden Idol Behind *Ordo Amoris*

Behind every empire lies an altar—and behind many altars lies a treasury. One of the most enduring and subtle forms of misordered love in Christian history is the love of money. This is no modern innovation. St. Augustine, whose framework of *Ordo Amoris* undergirds so much of Western theology, was clear on this point: sin is not primarily about loving bad things, but about loving good things *in the wrong*

order. Money, like family or work or nation, is not inherently evil. But when it is loved above justice, mercy, and God Himself, it becomes not just a distraction but an idol.

Augustine's insight remains a sharp and unsettling critique of both individual and institutional ethics. Wealth is seductive precisely because it promises what love and faith demand: security, influence, and power. And yet, the Gospel consistently warns that wealth is not only dangerous—it is often a sign of spiritual peril. Jesus did not say it was hard for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven *because of what they did with their wealth*, but because of what wealth does to the soul. It calcifies the heart. It clouds judgment. It nurtures the illusion of self-sufficiency. It disorders love.

The Beatitudes reject wealth not with nuance, but with clarity. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Luke's version is even more direct: “Blessed are you who are poor,” and conversely, “Woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort” (Luke 6:24). In Jesus' own ministry, wealth is rarely presented as neutral. It is something to give away, something that hinders discipleship, something that keeps the young ruler from following Christ. In the Beatitude worldview, those with less are not spiritually inferior but spiritually prioritized, precisely because their dependency and humility mirror the posture necessary to receive grace.

And yet, despite this clarity, institutional Christianity has long rationalized the accumulation and protection of wealth—even while quoting scriptures that condemn it. The medieval Church acquired vast lands and coffers even as it preached detachment from worldly goods. Prosperity theology in modern America equates financial success with divine favor, inverting the very logic of the Beatitudes. Churches invest in massive buildings, endowments, and lobbying efforts, often justified as necessary for spreading the Gospel—yet in practice, these funds frequently serve the preservation of institutional power rather than the alleviation of human suffering.

This rationalization continues in contemporary politics. Leaders who appeal to *Ordo Amoris* often use it to defend not only nationalism but capitalism—especially

when the two are fused under the banner of “Christian values.” The logic is subtle but effective: we must love our own first; we must protect our economic vitality; we must not let compassion interfere with market stability or national prosperity. In this framework, the poor become abstractions, and love becomes contingent on economic calculus.

Vice President JD Vance and others who adopt this approach are not outliers—they are inheritors of a long tradition in which wealth is not just tolerated by the Church, but protected under the guise of order. By invoking *Ordo Amoris*, they create a moral justification for economic inaction: our first duty is to ourselves, to our nation, to our bottom line. The stranger at the gate can wait. The poor must be served only after the rich are secured.

The tragedy of this approach is not simply its hypocrisy—it is its blindness to the transformative power of Christian love. The Gospel does not call believers to protect capital; it calls them to pour it out. It does not bless the hoarding of resources; it blesses the widow who gives all she has. The Beatitudes remind us that the economy of God is not one of scarcity, but of abundance through surrender.

The love of money, then, is not just a personal vice—it is the hidden idol behind *Ordo Amoris* when it is stripped of grace and deployed in service of empire. When love is ordered in such a way that wealth is prioritized over mercy, national interest over human need, and institutional survival over radical grace, we have not followed Augustine—we have betrayed him. And more importantly, we have betrayed Christ.

7. What Happens When Rulers Invoke Theology in Crisis

Throughout history, theology has often functioned as the language of legitimacy. When empires wobble, when social cohesion fractures, and when the confidence of the people falters, rulers have turned not to philosophers or economists—but to priests and theologians. Theology, with its promise of eternal order and divine sanction, becomes a tool for calming the public and restoring control. In moments

of crisis, when mere policy seems insufficient, religious language is deployed to give moral weight to political necessity.

This is not a recent innovation. From Pharaohs declaring themselves gods, to Constantine aligning with the Church to solidify Roman unity, to monarchs invoking the “divine right of kings,” the union of theological authority with state power has always served a dual function: it soothes the conscience of the ruler and pacifies the conscience of the ruled. In such arrangements, theology is no longer the voice of the prophets crying in the wilderness—it becomes the voice of the court chaplain, blessing what must be done to preserve the realm.

Vice President JD Vance operates within this same historical pattern. Faced with the challenge of cultural fragmentation, economic anxiety, and a perceived erosion of traditional values, Vance has turned to theology—not to inspire spiritual awakening, but to justify the state’s coercive actions. By invoking *Ordo Amoris* to defend immigration control, he effectively baptizes national self-interest, dressing exclusion in the robes of moral duty. The message is clear: we are not turning away the stranger because we are callous; we are doing it because our love must be rightly ordered.

This theological maneuver is strategic. It deflects criticism by casting policy as virtue. But it also reveals a deeper truth: in times of crisis, rulers prefer a theology that stabilizes the state, not one that challenges its foundations. The radical ethic of the Beatitudes—where the poor are lifted up, the peacemakers honored, and the persecuted blessed—threatens imperial logic. It suggests that power must serve the powerless, that the last must be first, and that greatness lies not in control but in compassion. In short, it disrupts everything empire needs to survive.

That is why Beatitude ethics are so often ignored, spiritualized, or deferred. They are beautiful in theory but “impractical” in governance. They may be taught in Sunday schools and quoted in pulpits, but they are rarely applied in legislative chambers or war rooms. The Sermon on the Mount is celebrated as moral poetry, not as political philosophy. And yet, Jesus never presented it as optional. His vision

of the Kingdom of God was not abstract—it was a direct confrontation with the values of empire.

Thus, the Church and its theologians are left with a sobering choice. They can offer theology as a mirror to power, helping rulers see their actions in the light of Christ. Or they can offer theology as a disguise for power, shielding injustice with divine rhetoric. The question is not simply whether theology is being invoked, but *whose image it reflects*. Is it the crucified Christ who forgave His enemies, or Caesar who conquered them? Is it the God who sides with the outcast, or the one who protects the fortress?

The test of theology is not how well it defends the state in crisis, but how faithfully it echoes the voice of the poor, the broken, and the stranger. When rulers invoke theology, we must ask: is this a prophetic word or a political calculation? Is this love, or is it order masquerading as love?

Theology in crisis is a mirror. But it may not reflect what rulers hope to see. It reflects the Cross—or it reflects the sword. And the Church must decide, again and again, which one it will carry.

8. Conclusion: Toward a Beatitude-Driven Christianity

In an age of rising authoritarianism, cultural polarization, and collapsing public trust, the temptation for both the Church and the state is to retreat into theology as order—a comforting architecture of responsibility, priority, and protection. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ does not exist to reinforce empires. It exists to proclaim a Kingdom that is not of this world, a Kingdom whose citizens are defined not by borders but by beatitude.

To move forward, the Church must reclaim the prophetic voice of Christ in the public square—a voice that speaks not in defense of power but in solidarity with the powerless. It is the voice that blessed the poor, not the privileged; that elevated the meek, not the mighty; that called peacemakers children of God, and pronounced woes upon the rich and satisfied. This voice, often muffled by

institutional anxiety and political compromise, must be allowed to speak again, even if it disrupts the Church's proximity to worldly authority.

The time has come to reaffirm a fundamental truth: power must serve love, not define it. When theology is used to define love by the needs of the powerful—whether political, economic, or ecclesiastical—it has already betrayed Christ. Jesus did not come to rearrange the moral furniture of the empire; He came to turn over the tables. His love was not calibrated by efficiency or hierarchy—it was reckless, radical, and indiscriminate. It healed the unclean, dined with sinners, touched the lepers, and forgave the executioners.

A Beatitude-driven Christianity does not ask, “Who do I owe love to first?” It asks, “Who needs love now?” It does not fear the chaos of grace. It embraces it, trusting that divine mercy is wiser than human order. It calls us not to love in layers, but to love with abandon. It challenges both Church and state to see the margins not as burdens, but as the heart of the Kingdom.

As America navigates its own moment of reckoning, and as leaders like JD Vance invoke theological frameworks to hold together a fraying empire, the Church must remember the words of Christ, not the logic of Caesar. For when the dust of fallen empires settles—and it always does—the question will not be how well we maintained control, or how loyally we loved those in power. The question will be this:

Did we love in order—or did we love as Christ commanded?

The answer will not be found in theological systems or political platforms, but in the lives we touched, the strangers we welcomed, the enemies we forgave, and the crosses we carried. In the end, the Church's survival will matter far less than its faithfulness—and its faithfulness will be measured not by the strength of its institutions, but by the depth of its love.

Let that love be Beatitude-shaped. Let it disturb us. Let it save us.

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