

For Reflection: How might I show mercy to all people – especially those that I do not think deserve it?

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY WILL SEE GOD (Mt. 5:8).

The sixth beatitude invites the disciple to be pure of heart. It recalls Psalm 24 that asks who will go up to the mountain of God. The Psalmist answers, “Those who have clean hands and pure hearts” (Ps 24:4). The mountain symbolizes God’s presence. To ascend it requires a pure heart, free from sin and false illusions.

Purity of heart requires an interior attitude that seeks what is right. The pure of heart enter into relationship with the holy God who dwells within us. The Blessed Virgin Mary best reflects the clear light issuing from the pure of heart.

For Reflection: What are some ways that I might cultivate a pure heart that is free from sin?

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY WILL BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD (Mt 5:9).

Often beset with wars and strife, the Jewish people sought peace, using the word “shalom,” meaning (among other things) “peace,” to greet those they met. Jesus is our “Prince of Peace.” In Scripture, after healing the sick, he frequently says, “Go in peace.” Peacemakers seek peace within their hearts and share this gift from God with others.

Peace is an inner quality of the soul that connects a disciple with the living God. Jesus reconciled us to the Father, gained our redemption, and brought us peace. Peace, which springs from justice, is a fruit of the Holy Spirit inviting us into God’s interior life to bring us happiness.

For Reflection: What are some ways that I might foster peace in my relationships with others?

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (Mt 5:10).

The eighth beatitude reflects early Church persecutions. Prophets and other Jewish leaders were persecuted, as were Jesus and his disciples.



In today’s world, persecution often takes the form of bullying, harassment, and unjust practices. We should strive to overcome these injustices if we can, for no one should suffer needlessly. There are times when persecutions against faith may require the supreme sacrifice of martyrdom. This beatitude assures that God’s justice ultimately will prevail.

For Reflection: Do I have the strength and courage to stand up to persecution for my Catholic faith?

Additional Resources

Books

The Beatitudes for Children, Rosemarie Gortler and Donna Piscitelli (Our Sunday Visitor, 2009).

Called to Be Holy, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan (Our Sunday Visitor, 2005).

Louder Than Words: The Art of Living as a Catholic, Matthew Leonard (Our Sunday Visitor, 2013).

The New Catholic Answer Bible, NABRE, Ed. by Dr. Paul Thigpen (Our Sunday Visitor, 2011).

Only Love Can Save Us, Pope Francis (Our Sunday Visitor, 2013).

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By Rev. Robert J. Hater, PhD
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LIVING THE BEATITUDES:

The Path to a Happy Life



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“This is the law for those who have been saved and have opened their hearts to salvation. This is the law of the free, with the freedom of the Holy Spirit.”

-Pope Francis, June 10, 2013 Mass

Our contemporary world confuses pleasure with happiness. We are told that money, travel, pleasure, power, and other attractions will make us happy. No matter how hard we try, such allurements never satisfy us. So what then is our fate?

Jesus gives us the answer. He teaches us that the living God offers us the path to abiding happiness. We trod this path when we live the beatitudes. They are God's road map to cultivating a happy life. They describe the spirituality of a true disciple by setting the standard for right action in light of Jesus' cross and resurrection. They help us live Jesus' way.

The beatitudes are Jesus' gift to us. They show us the path to a happy life. As faithful disciples, we walk this path to achieve true happiness.

Jesus proclaimed the Eight Beatitudes during a time of harsh Roman rule. Society today is also beset with challenges that bring pain and adversity to those living a moral life. The beatitudes are our road map, regardless of status, age, or position.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (Mt 5:3).

The first beatitude reflects the words of Isaiah, quoted by Jesus in the synagogue, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18). The biblical poor recognize their need for God and accept his sovereignty. The phrase "poor in spirit" is connected with humility and recalls the Magnificat, where Mary speaks of her lowliness (see Lk 1:48).



The first beatitude demands absolute trust in God and humility before the almighty and all-loving God. Being poor in spirit has nothing to do with a particular state in life. People who are poor in spirit strive to achieve an attitude of trust in God, which is both liberating and humanizing. Achieving this brings freedom of heart and detachment from worldly things that enable us to grow in love of God and neighbor.

For Reflection: When is it most difficult for me to place my trust in God?

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY WILL BE COMFORTED (Mt 5:4).

The second beatitude describes those who experience loss and the intense feelings of grief that accompany any such death or tragedy. This beatitude harkens back to God's words, "Comfort, O comfort my people" (Is 40:1). When Paul experienced devastation, he called on the "God of all consolation" (2 Cor 1:3). The call for comfort reaches full expression when Jesus' mother stood by the cross.



Grief is a part of living, especially when something happens to a beloved child, spouse, parent, or friend. This beatitude promises that God always comforts us, often through people who are with us in our darkest hours. To give and receive comfort is the path of a disciple. When we mourn, we choose the way of the disciple, confident that victory will be ours. When we mourn, we act in the spirit of Christ who mourned and put himself in his Father's hands.

For Reflection: How do I offer support and God's loving comfort to those who are grieving?

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY WILL INHERIT THE EARTH (Mt 5:5).



The third beatitude connects us with the Old Testament notion of meekness that is associated with wisdom. Jesus encouraged his disciples to be meek in his words, "Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Mt 11:29).

This meekness does not sanction dominance over the weak. Rather, when faced with inevitable challenges, the disciple imitates Jesus, who stood before Pilate and endured excruciating pain to win our salvation. The meek are not wimps. Their strength comes from the crucified Christ. When tempted by passion, fear, or force, the virtuous person's meekness brings inner strength, calm, and peace. As a virtue, meekness prepares us for the unexpected and joins us to the Risen Christ.

For Reflection: How might I approach my work, my family, and my daily life with a spirit of humility?

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY WILL BE FILLED (Mt 5:6).

The fourth beatitude speaks of hunger in biblical terms — namely, hunger in the whole person, not limited to physical or spiritual hunger. This hunger begins with hunger for God, who alone satisfies the hunger of the human heart.

The disciple striving for righteousness develops virtues associated with the right way of living. This justice is rooted in God's love and directed toward love of neighbor. The beatitude asks us to develop a just heart and act in accordance with it.

Jesus, our model, was unjustly persecuted and put to death. His resurrection testifies that human injustice was conquered by God's justice. As with Jesus, we believe that whatever injustice we endure will be vanquished by God.

For Reflection: What are some ways that I practice righteousness through loving and serving my neighbor?

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY WILL RECEIVE MERCY (Mt 5:7).

Mercy, a thread passing through God's revelation to humankind, is intimately associated with justice. Even when we sin, God's mercy remains. As Exodus says and the Psalms repeat: "The Lord is merciful and gracious...He does not deal with us according to our sins,

nor repay us according to our iniquities" (Ps 103:8, 10). In Jesus' teaching, the parable of the prodigal son reflects God's mercy.

Mercy tears down barriers between people. Just as Jesus turned the other cheek, so we, as Christian disciples, are called to be merciful when given the opportunity to be reconciled with someone who has wronged us. Like Jesus, a disciple responds with mercy.

