

INTRODUCTION TO CATHOLICISM

## Chapter 27



# The Beatitudes

*Living a moral life at the highest level.*

## Chapter 27

# The Beatitudes

When asked, “What do you want most out of life?” most people would probably say, “I want to be happy.” The problem with this answer is that few people agree on how to define happiness, probably because most people seek happiness in the here-and-now. The problem is that here-and-now happiness is just that: here today and gone tomorrow.

True happiness is permanent, and there is only one place where permanent happiness can be found: in the presence of Jesus in Heaven.

Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes to indicate that those who follow them are living moral life at the highest level. Those who seek the highest levels of sanctity are truly blessed. As a result of seeking personal sanctity, they reach the highest levels of happiness and personal sanctity in this life. The closer we come to union with God in this life, the happier we will be. It is a foretaste of the permanent happiness which is Heaven.



## THE BEATITUDES

The word beatitude comes from the Latin word meaning “blessed.” Those who keep the Beatitudes will be blessed with the love of God both here and in the heavenly home. Jesus’ preaching takes up the promises made to Abraham and his descendants that they would possess the earth. Jesus leads us to see that this promise refers to heavenly territory.

The Beatitudes take up and fulfill God’s promises from Abraham on by ordering them to the Kingdom of heaven. They respond to the desire for happiness that God has placed in the human heart. (CCC 1725)

When we study the Beatitudes, we notice first that they do not reflect the manner in which many people live their lives. Second, we see that they require self-sacrifice.

In the first chapter, we found that we are called to imitate Jesus to the point of identifying totally with him. Total identification with Jesus means accepting a life of sacrifice for the salvation of others, just as he did. To accomplish this, we must learn to live the Beatitudes, which take us beyond the commandments and lead us to perfection. They lead us to heaven, the vision of God, permanent participation in his divine nature, and rest in God as his children.

In the Gospel of Matthew, eight Beatitudes are listed:

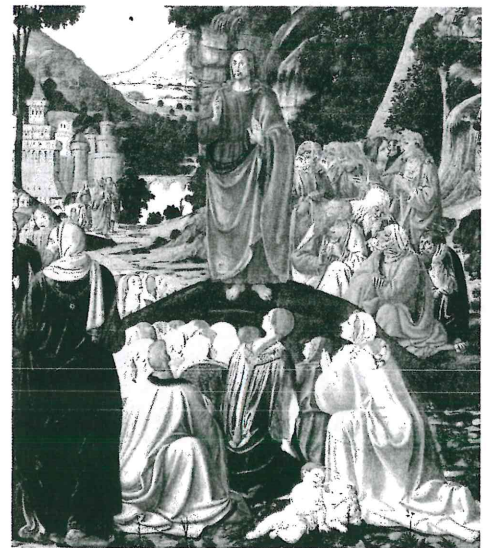
- † Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- † Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- † Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- † Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- † Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
- † Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- † Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- † Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 5: 3-10)

The Beatitudes reflect the love of Christ and call the baptized to live them as a way of demonstrating that they share in the love and mission of Christ, a mission of self-sacrificing love.

The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ’s disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints. (CCC 1717)

The search for happiness is the longest unbroken quest in every human life. For many, the search is for individual pleasure over every other consideration, a love of self over everything else. Ultimately, such pleasures leave humans empty, for happiness cannot be found in self-seeking. Through the Beatitudes, we can attain the highest measure of

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*Through the Beatitudes, we can attain the highest measure of true happiness in this life by denying self, seeking Christ, and assisting others to their salvation.*

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*We were created to attain perfect happiness, which is found only in loving and in being loved by the Lord.*



*Mother Teresa of Calcutta*

*To see her was to experience a strong measure of the total love which is found in Jesus.*

true happiness in this life by denying self, seeking Christ, and assisting others to their salvation. Jesus has placed this desire to serve other people in man's heart to draw all men to himself.

The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude. This vocation is addressed to each individual personally, but also to the Church as a whole, the new people made up of those who have accepted the promise and live from it in faith. (CCC 1719)

The New Testament describes the Beatitudes in such terms as the vision of God, the joy of the Lord, and the coming of God's kingdom. This is because by denying ourselves and following the Beatitudes, we are joined to the divine life of the Trinity, a life of complete love, true knowledge, and service of God.

In a culture that stresses wealth and success, the idea of completely denying oneself may not seem like the path to happiness. Christ, however, offers true peace to those who seek personal sanctity through self-sacrifice. This is a peace that seems to go against our understanding. The life of sacrifice must be practiced for one truly to understand its value. Such a life is an invitation to purify all earthly desires from our hearts and to seek the love of God above all else.

It is only right for people to seek God's love and to love him in return. This is God's call to all people. We were created to attain perfect happiness, which is found only in loving and in being loved by the Lord. When we act with love toward God and other people, we can be sure of the mutual love between ourselves and God.

Indeed, we should try to show this love throughout our lives. The benefits of science, human fame, wealth, power, or any other human achievement, as great as they may seem, are left behind at the hour of death. The only riches to be taken into the next life are the fruits of our relationship with Jesus, who came so that man may participate in his divine life. Those who seek sanctity demonstrate true and real participation in the life of Jesus. Mother Teresa may be the best-known example of this identification with Christ's sufferings. To see her was to experience a strong measure of the total love which is found in Jesus.

Conforming ourselves to Christ is the work of a lifetime. But our goal should be to say with St. Paul, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2: 20).

The Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, and the apostolic catechesis describe for us the paths that lead to the Kingdom of heaven. Sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we tread them, step by step, by everyday acts. By the working of the Word of Christ, we slowly bear fruit in the Church to the glory of God.<sup>1</sup> (CCC 1724)

## **BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

The first beatitude is the key to the others. To state it another way, "Blessed are those who realize that even with all their talents and possessions they are poor in God's sight. As a result, they have no

## The Beatitudes

attachment to goods, fame, power, name, opinion, control over others, or their own life." In a word, those who have no attachment to this life or its pleasures will find it much easier to become saints.

Who is poor in spirit? You could think of someone who has no attachment to God or God's grace as poor in spirit. Obviously, he would be the poorest of spirits, for he is not blessed in the manner of the Beatitudes. On the other hand, someone who is poor in spirit could be a person who does not have an undue attachment to this world and its attractions. As with people who are materially poor, possessions do not get in between the person who follows this beatitude and God. This is what the first beatitude is about.

Does this mean a person has no need of material goods? Of course not. All of us, depending on our state in life, have need of some goods on a regular basis. The best way to express what this beatitude encourages is to say that while we may own goods, they do not own us. We do not seek after more than we need, and the excess of our goods is given away for the good of the poor.

The first beatitude warns us that those who are more attached to goods than to God will wind up with neither God nor goods. It is possible to have too many clothes, CDs, or other possessions. Many people find this statement foolish, since the culture in which we live encourages us to own more and more things, whether we need them or not. The large number of public storage warehouses, though, indicates that many people own more than they could ever use. Though there are some people who genuinely need this extra space, for many others it is a matter of holding onto possessions they could just as easily do without.

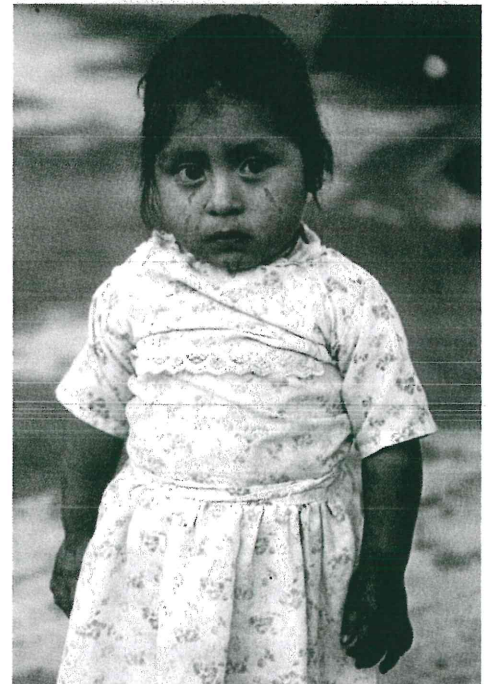
Those who are poor in spirit desire only the goods necessary to ensure a healthy standard of living in accordance with their particular state of life. Those who live this beatitude will love their neighbors enough to share the excess of their personal goods with them. The problem arises for most of us when a determination must be made: what exactly are "excess goods"? The answer lies in the phrase "state of life." For those who are poor, it is an easy answer: there is no excess. For the rest of us, the phrase indicates that there are different levels of need for goods. For example, those whose professions require that they present themselves as successful, such as a lawyers or stockbrokers, have a greater need to show off personal wealth than those whose job doesn't have such an emphasis.

The real goods each of us has, though, are acts compiled at the end of a lifetime of struggle. In the matter of goods, we must keep in mind the promise of Jesus, who said, "Seek you first the kingdom of God, then all the rest will be added unto you."

Examination for being poor in spirit:

- † Do I take good care of the goods I own?
- † Do I contribute to my church?
- † Do I always purchase whatever I want, whether I need it or not?
- † Do I have more clothes than I need?
- † Do I share with those in need?

*The first beatitude warns us that those who are more attached to goods than to God will wind up with neither God nor goods.*



*Those who live this beatitude will love their neighbors enough to share the excess of their personal goods with them.*

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## BLESSED ARE THEY WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.

Possibly the most difficult mystery to understand is death. It's easy to accept that the sin of Adam and Eve is the cause of death, yet it is another thing when death becomes a personal reality. In an instant, you lose all contact with someone you love. Although we know otherwise, the separation feels permanent. We can no longer see or converse with the person who died.

In this situation, our faith may be tested as never before. It is then that we must recall the words, "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted." How? Our faith tells us that the union of our suffering with the suffering of Christ is of benefit to those for whom we offer it. Christ turns our suffering into an act of salvation for others. It is also of benefit to us when we accept the suffering of loss as a mortification for our personal sins. The greater the suffering, the closer Christ is to us, and he will see us through. Remember that Jesus mourned the death of Lazarus with Mary and Martha; he understands human suffering (cf. Jn 11:1-44).

It must also be born in mind that Christ blesses those who comfort people in mourning for their act of Christian love. Jesus said, "what you have done to the least of my brothers, you have done unto me."

This beatitude applies to other mourners in addition to those who sorrow over death. It is also a promise to those who are genuinely sorry for their offenses to God. If someone mourns over his sins, either his own or another's, God will recognize his prayer and give graces accordingly. In this way too, those who mourn will be comforted.

Also, many people mourn over the loss of opportunities or earthly goods. Their mourning might be better converted to praying for God's assistance in accepting the loss and in understanding whether personal failings caused this loss. Since loss is a part of everyone's life, the suffering that comes from any loss, whether from death or other causes, should be accepted as a means to strengthen oneself to accept future suffering as Christ did, to give it real and permanent meaning. This is the work of a lifetime.

Examination for comforting those who mourn:

- † Do I pray for those who are suffering?
- † Do I attend wakes and funeral services even if they make me feel uncomfortable?
- † Do I comfort those obviously in pain?
- † Do I accept suffering willingly?
- † Do I offer my suffering so as to make up for sin?

## BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL POSSESS THE EARTH.

It has been said that the Christian should be counter-cultural, that is, counter to any trends in the culture that go against Christianity. If there is any virtue that is truly counter-cultural in these times, it is meekness.



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Every year it seems that some new award or honor is set up so that people can come together to glory in their achievements. A true understanding of one's talents, however, should enable us to see that all our gifts come from God. God is "Number One," not us. The desire to use one's talents well is to be commended, but care must be taken to be certain that success does not turn into self-glorification. Jesus said, "Without me you can do nothing."

Meekness allows us to endure suffering, recognizing it as being part of God's plan for our lives. It also leads directly to humility. Since humility is a virtue acquired by accepting situations in which we are humbled, humility cannot be acquired through one's own actions. The humble person has a true sense of his worth and recognizes that all talents are on loan from God rather than selected by personal choice.

A humble person is not so filled with pride that any disagreement, slight, or insult angers him. It is good to examine oneself each evening regarding any offenses we believe we suffered during the day and how we responded in each circumstance. Holding one's tongue when someone says something with which we may disagree presents an excellent opportunity to mortify oneself. An honest examination of perceived offenses should lead to the realization that there is no need to respond to them unless it is a case of an injustice that must be rectified.

Examination for meekness:

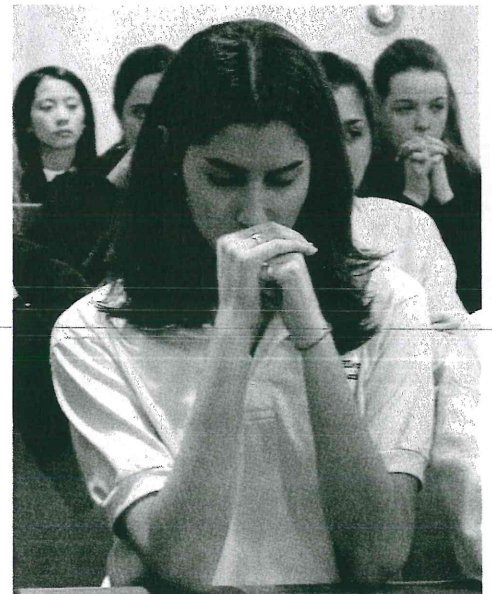
- † Do I accept correction with a smile?
- † Do I brag about my accomplishments?
- † Do I correct others with gentleness?
- † Do I accept compliments graciously?
- † Do I seek the best place for myself?
- † When things go wrong do I get angry or violent?

## **BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY WILL BE SATISFIED.**

If you desire a rule to live your life by, make it, "Go for greatness in the Lord," or simply, "Be the very best you can be for Jesus." For that is the meaning of this beatitude. How does one achieve this greatness? By working toward becoming a saint. In the Old Testament, the "just man" is one who is busy giving to his neighbor what is due to him, recognizing this as a work owed to God. In the New Testament, we have the model of Jesus himself, who went beyond justice, doing good to those who did not deserve it, making up for the sins he had not even committed, the sins of us all.

When Jesus tells us, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," he is calling us to be more than just; he is calling us to give people more than we think they deserve (Mt 5:44). It is a call to identify totally with Jesus, the Holy One, who himself prayed for those who persecuted him while he was on the cross. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness seek to imitate the holiness of Jesus.

*The humble person has a true sense of his worth and recognizes that all talents are on loan from God rather than selected by personal choice.*



*Holiness is possible if we are willing to conform our will to God's.*

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*As Christians called to imitate Christ, we must be merciful as Christ is merciful.*



*The only way for some to find Christ, in fact, is to see his love reflected in our actions.*

At first, it may seem impossible to achieve this holiness, yet Jesus told us, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5: 48). Holiness is possible if we are willing to conform our will to God's. We will accomplish this if we have a spiritual director and a regular prayer life with Jesus. Regular prayer helps us establish a strong relationship with Jesus, and a spiritual director will guide us to see what the Holy Spirit is asking of us.

The use of the phrase "hunger and thirst" is key to understanding this beatitude. Think of the times we have been extremely hungry or thirsty. Real hunger and thirst cause a constant ache in mind and body that will not leave us till we are satisfied. In the same way, there is no true search for holiness unless there is an ache in the mind that will only be satisfied in the continuing search for Christ. If we have this kind of desire, we will place God's will above our own throughout our lives.

Examination for holiness:

- † Do I strive to do God's will?
- † Do I look for spiritual direction when I need it?
- † Do I read Sacred Scripture to learn how to imitate Jesus?
- † Do I go to confession and receive communion regularly?
- † Do I seek to identify with Jesus' life and actions?
- † Do I devote specific time to prayer and learning my faith better?

## **BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY.**

Who does not need mercy in their life at one time or another? What would be the effect on society and human relations if justice were always meted out on a strict basis? Whereas the Old Testament calls for an "eye for an eye," Christ told people to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5: 44).

Following this beatitude offers a singular opportunity for us to show the love of Christ to others. The only way for some to find Christ, in fact, is to see his love reflected in our actions. When we do this, we build the kingdom of God on earth: for love begets love, and mercy begets mercy, whereas turning away from these virtues can only destroy people. Christ demonstrates in the parable of the unjust steward, who was forgiven his large debt and then refused to forgive a small debt, that he will be merciful to those who show mercy, and that he will judge harshly those who have judged harshly (cf. Mt 18: 23-35).

Humanly speaking, it is too easy to overlook the seriousness of sin as a great offense to God that deserves penance, yet the great love God has for us is manifested in his willingness to forgive sin as often as we are sorry. There is no human mercy to match this mercy, but his actions indicate to us that as Christians called to imitate Christ, we must be merciful as Christ is merciful.

When we are offended, it is well to remember that we, too, offend others, regret it later, and desire to be forgiven. To be merciful is a sign of strength, not weakness.



Examination for mercy:

- † Do I ask for the grace to forgive others easily?
- † Do I have compassion for those who suffer?
- † Do I keep in mind the many times Christ has shown mercy to me?
- † Do I try to avoid grudges against those who offend me?
- † Do I try to forget the offenses of others as quickly as I wish my offenses to be forgotten?

## **BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.**

The sixth beatitude proclaims, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."<sup>2</sup> "Pure in heart" refers to those who have attuned their intellects and wills to the demands of God's holiness, chiefly in three areas: charity;<sup>3</sup> chastity or sexual rectitude;<sup>4</sup> love of truth, and orthodoxy of faith.<sup>5</sup> There is a connection between purity of heart, of body, and of faith:

The faithful must believe the articles of the Creed "so that by believing they may obey God, by obeying may live well, by living well may purify their hearts, and with pure hearts may understand what they believe."<sup>6</sup> (CCC 2518)

A pure heart is a heart that has a special place reserved for Jesus. Because of this, it is a heart that guards itself against temptations against the sixth and ninth commandments. The practice of this beatitude leads us to see the person of others as God sees while avoiding seeing them solely in their sexual dimension, which reduces the neighbor to an object of personal pleasure. Sexual rectitude obliges us to approach every person and every occasion as an opportunity to demonstrate the total love Jesus demands of us for our neighbor. Lack of sexual rectitude, on the other hand, commits us to seeking only a particular personal pleasure in others and denying their dignity and worth as children of God. Since practice leads to morality, those who violate chastity soon find themselves in opposition to the Church's teaching on sexual morality.

Being pure of heart also requires that we love the truth. We have been given the truth by Christ and through his Church. Many people who are Catholic do not have a real love for Christ and his Church. We can see this in the poor turnout at Mass on Sunday. Only about 25% of Catholics go to weekly Mass. Love of the truth should inspire us to worship as the Church instructs us.

Examination for purity of heart:

- † Do I strive to live according to the teachings of the Church? Do I do so with love or grudgingly?
- † Do I turn to Jesus and Mary in prayer when I am tempted?
- † Do I seek advice in Confession regarding the virtue of purity?
- † Do I ask the assistance of my guardian angel when I am tempted?
- † Do I avoid the influence of those who do not think and act in purity?
- † Do I avoid places where I may be tempted against purity?

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*Peacemakers  
must first of all  
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*Peacemakers  
do not have a passion  
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but are passionate  
for the truth.*

- † Do I know the truths of the Church?
- † Do I strive to understand these truths and believe them completely?

## **BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD.**

In a world of strife and multiple disagreements, there is need for many peacemakers. Peacemakers must first of all be people of peace. Peaceable people are unwilling to force their views on others. They are aware that they have the truth and are willing to defend the truth, but they are completely opposed to forcing others to see life as they see life. They adhere to the advice of St. Paul, "Keep peace with all men, where it is possible, for your part (Rom 12:18). They are aware that the truth they offer will often be a source of division for those who should accept it, particularly when the recipient is not acting morally.

Peacemakers are not willing to compromise their beliefs to avoid a disagreement. They are not fearful people, for they are allied with Jesus in attempting to spread the truth. They therefore have the power to free from sin those with whom they come into contact. They do not have a passion for argument but are passionate for the truth. They discuss; they do not argue. They grant the other his opinion, but are not willing to accept opinion as fact. They can disagree without being disagreeable. They do not label others or call names.

Examination for being a peacemaker:

- † Do I accept that others can have opinions contrary to mine?
- † Do I seek to win in every discussion?
- † Do I see others as adversaries?
- † Do I disagree without being disagreeable?
- † Do I ask the Holy Spirit for assistance in seeking the truth?

## **BLESSED ARE THEY WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.**

More Christians died for Christ in the twentieth century than in any other. As we read this chapter, Christians are being persecuted in China, where they are imprisoned and killed, and in the Sudan, where they are kidnapped and sold as slaves.

The word traditionally applied to Christians who die for Christ is martyr, which comes from a word meaning "witness." Martyrs who die for Christ are rewarded with his immediate presence in heaven.

A famous American bishop, Fulton Sheen, coined the phrase "dry martyr" to describe those who are made to suffer for Christ without being killed for their witness. There are times when Jesus expects us to be dry martyrs for him. This occurs when our friends tempt us to break the commandments and ridicule us for refusing to turn our backs on God.

Many Americans find it difficult to go against the culture when it promotes evil ideas and actions, yet we must remember that even

though it is not easy, we are called to be virtuous. Virtue is acquired by repeatedly choosing good actions over evil ones.

To build this habit of virtue, young people need witnesses to Christ, and the best witnesses are often those from their own peer group who refuse to go along with the crowd. When we are pressured by our friends to commit sin, we must call upon the Holy Spirit, who gave us special graces in Confirmation, to enable us to do what Jesus expects of us.

Jesus consoled all Christians, "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33).

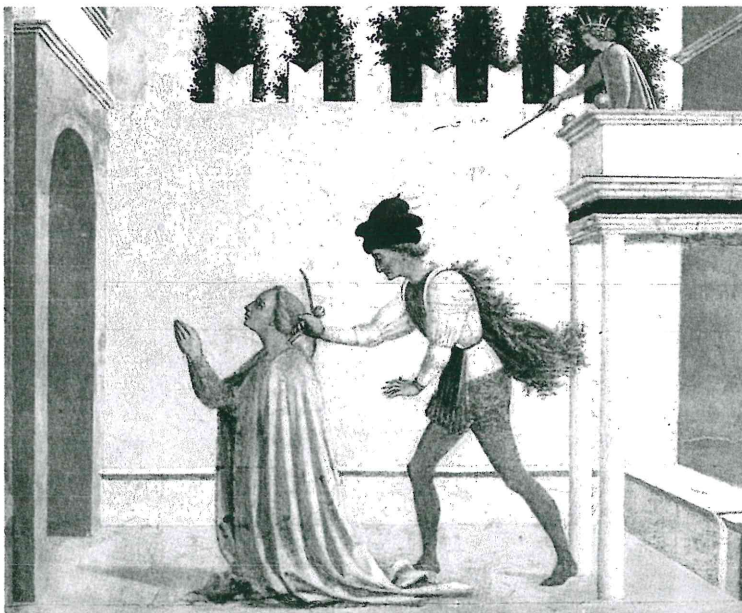
Examination for suffering persecution:

- † Do I pray daily for those Christians suffering persecution?
- † Do I encourage others to stand up for what is right?
- † Do I support my friends who do stand up for what is right?
- † Do I offer my suffering for acting virtuously for those who persecute me?
- † Do I turn to Jesus when tempted to go along with the crowd?

## CONCLUSION

Everyone who strives to keep the commandments will reach heaven. Yet, Jesus has called everyone to a higher life. It is the life of sanctity as lived by his mother and all the saints.

Sanctity is accomplished by learning Jesus' teachings, especially the Beatitudes. By living them, we are able to live a life that imitates Jesus and joins us to the divine nature of the Trinity. This type of life will gain us greater rewards in heaven.



*When we are pressured by our friends to commit sin, we must call upon the Holy Spirit, who gave us special graces in Confirmation, to enable us to do what Jesus expects of us.*

### *St. Lucy*

Martyred c. 304 – A Sicilian, Lucy was the daughter of wealthy and noble parents. She was a dedicated virgin who gave away her goods to feed the poor.

Under the reign of the anti-Christian Emperor Diocletian, Lucy refused a marriage proposal. The rejected suitor denounced Lucy to the Emperor as a Christian. Lucy was sentenced to a brothel, but when the guards came to take her away, she became as stone and could not be moved. She was then ordered burned to death, but the flames would not touch her. Lucy was finally stabbed in the throat.

Lucy is patron of eye diseases because her name comes from the Latin "lux" meaning "light."

# The Beatitudes

## Chapter 27 Study Guide

### SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Agnes was born in Albania. While in school, Agnes sang in the choir, played the mandolin, and volunteered at the Legion of Mary. At the age of twelve she began to feel called to life as a missionary. Yet she was very uncertain. How could she be sure?

She began to pray a lot about her vocation. She also talked with her mother, her sister Aga, and her confessor. When she asked the confessor, "How can I be sure?" He replied, "Through your JOY. If you feel really happy by the idea that God might call you to serve him, him and your neighbor, then this is the evidence that you have a call. The deep inner joy that you feel is the compass that indicates your direction in life." Finally at age 18, the decision was made. Agnes was going to India after assisting in several religious retreats for the past two years.

In Darjeeling, she finished her training and made her first vows as Sister Teresa. After helping at a little hospital in Bengali, she was sent to Calcutta to be a teacher. As she went deeper into the Indian culture, she became more enamored with the poor. Sister Teresa was finally inspired to live among the poor, assisting them in all their needs.

The climate was a scorching 115°F with 95% humidity. The trash, open sewers, insects, rats, and cockroaches must have left her dreaming for a return to her clean classroom complete with fan and mosquito netting. One day as an American journalist commented on Mother Teresa's tending to a gangrenous patient: "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars!" The Mother replied, "Neither would I, but I do it for Christ."



**Mother Teresa of Calcutta**  
(1910-1997)

The Missionaries of Charity, Mother Teresa's order, are first and foremost a contemplative order, devoting several hours a day to prayer. Mother Teresa rhetorically asks, "If we were not in constant union with God, how could we endure the sacrifices we must make by living in the most miserable conditions?" Besides the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, these sisters take a fourth vow: service to the poorest of the poor. Throughout the world, the Missionaries have started houses for the terminally ill, for abandoned children, for lepers, and for AIDS patients.

Many choose to undertake difficult and unpleasant tasks in pursuit of some greater good. Mother Teresa and her sisters enjoyed sacrifice and service for its own sake.

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**SUPPLEMENTARY READING** CONTINUED

Consumerism says, “If I have this; if I don’t have to do that; if I could only be entertained in such a way, *then* I would be happy.” Eventually the drive for pleasure leads to addictions, perversions, and depression. Western society suffers not so much from material poverty, as spiritual poverty, *a poverty of love*. As a cure, Mother Teresa offers this prayer:

*The fruit of silence is prayer.*

*The fruit of prayer is faith.*

*The fruit of faith is love.*

*The fruit of love is service.*

*The fruit of service is peace.*

Mother Teresa’s message is that by service that flows from a deep prayer life, one can be at peace ... fulfilled ... happy ... *holy*.

**VOCABULARY**

**ATTACHMENT**

Unwillingness to abandon worldly riches for the Kingdom of Heaven.

**BEATITUDE**

Happiness or blessedness, especially the eternal happiness of heaven, which is described as the vision of God, or entering into God’s rest by those whom he makes partakers of the divine nature.

**COUNTERCULTURE**

A mode of life opposed to the conventional or dominant, that rejects established social values and practices, esp. among the young.

**DETACHMENT**

Willingness to abandon worldly riches for the Kingdom of Heaven.

**GUARDIAN ANGEL**

Angels assigned to protect and intercede for each person.

**HUMILITY**

The virtue by which a Christian acknowledges that God is the author of all good; avoids inordinate ambition or pride, and provides the foundation for turning to God in prayer; poverty of spirit.

**MEEKNESS**

Quality of relying on God’s mysterious plan; kindness or indulgence as opposed to anger; see hope, humility.

**MERCY**

The loving kindness, compassion, or forbearance shown to one who offends (e.g., the mercy of God to us sinners).

**MORTIFY**

To overcome sin and one’s sinful tendencies by various exercises.

**RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Justice, uprightness; conformity of life to the requirements of the divine or moral law; virtue, integrity.

**SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

One of Jesus’ first and most famous proclamations of the Gospel. The Beatitudes were given in the Sermon on the Mount.

**SEXUAL RECTITUDE**

See Chastity, Chapter 16.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. List some things that make you happy. What do you think would make you eternally happy? Is this thing possible to possess forever? Is it internal or external?
2. Why is happiness on this earth not true happiness?
3. Do you truly believe God is Infinite Goodness and that the goodness seen in created things is just a reflection?
4. Are Jesus' promises what you really want? Why or why not?
5. Explain all eight Beatitudes.
6. Do you believe Jesus will fulfill the promises made in the Beatitudes? Why or Why not? Has God ever *not* kept a Biblical promise?
7. Which group mentioned in the Beatitudes do you most identify with? Are you content with your reward?
8. Which of the promises made in the Beatitudes do you most desire?
9. Where does man find true happiness?

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. Write down a specific action to be followed for each beatitude. Set aside an action to be applied for each beatitude for the next eight days. After eight days, write an essay describing your experiences.
2. What are you most attached to: possessions, money, human respect, power, reputation, friends, athletic/artistic/scholastic ability? How can *detachment* bring you freedom? (Remember there is both "freedom from" and "freedom to.")
3. How do you think denying yourself leads to happiness? Think about the value of the temptations that people face in day-to-day life compared to the love of God. Write a paragraph answering this question.
4. Which beatitude should you apply to the following situations and how?
  - a. Albert's parents are going out of town for the weekend. He knows they would not want him to throw a party, but they did not say so specifically. When his friends find out there were no direct rules about not having a party, they insist that he throw one. Should Albert throw the party?
  - b. Lucia's history class just covered Martin Luther's split from the Catholic Church in 1517, which led to the founding of Protestant churches. Since the class is almost 50-50 Catholic to Protestant, there has been much discussion. Now, it seems that people are getting angry with each other. What beatitude should Lucia apply and how?
  - c. Pete's father is a surgeon and has done very well financially. Consequently, Pete has a lot of things, many of which his friends cannot afford. In Mass one Sunday, he hears in the Gospel reading that it is "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Pete gets a bit worried when he hears this. What beatitude should he follow and how?

## FROM THE CATECHISM

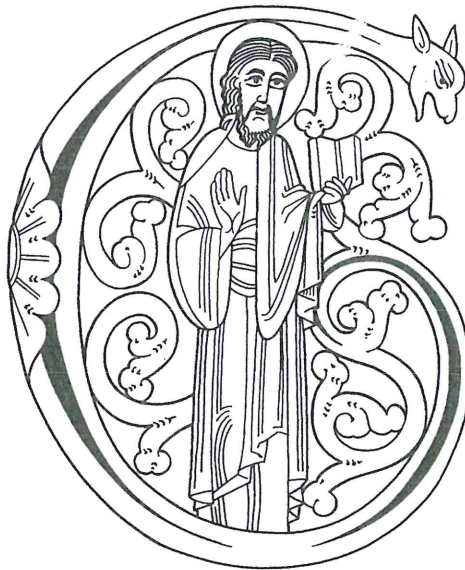
**1725** The Beatitudes take up and fulfill God's promises from Abraham on by ordering them to the Kingdom of heaven. They respond to the desire for happiness that God has placed in the human heart.

**1726** The Beatitudes teach us the final end to which God calls us: the Kingdom, the vision of God, participation in the divine nature, eternal life, filiation, rest in God.

**1727** The beatitude of eternal life is a gratuitous gift of God. It is supernatural, as is the grace that leads us there.

**1728** The Beatitudes confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods; they purify our hearts in order to teach us to love God above all things.

**1729** The beatitude of heaven sets the standards for discernment in the use of earthly goods in keeping with the law of God.



### Endnotes

1. Cf. the parable of the sower: Mt 13: 3-23.
2. Mt 5: 8.
3. Cf. 1 Tm 4: 3-9; 2 Tm 2: 22.
4. Cf. 1 Thes 4: 7; Col 3: 5; Eph 4: 19.
5. Cf. Ti 1: 15; 1 Tm 1: 3-4; 2 Tm 2: 23-26.
6. St. Augustine, *De fide et symbolo* 10, 25: PL 40, 196.

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