

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-13 and Luke 6:20-26

Beatitude means happiness. This is our Lord's plan for *true happiness*.

When Christ says "Blessed are the...", he means that they enjoy as much happiness as can be conceived. **St. Bruno**

The **poor** in spirit, the **meek**, those who **mourn**, those who **hunger and thirst** for righteousness, the **merciful**, the **pure in heart**, the **peacemakers**, and those who suffer **persecution** in their search for union with God; These are not different kinds of people but the different demands made on EVERYONE who wants to find HAPPINESS!

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- **Luke 6:24** Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.
- Poor in that which keeps you from God; rich in that which leads you to God

Riches, honors, pleasure ...cannot make us happy. The first step to be taken by one who wishes to attain the mountaintop is to abandon the road that leads downward. The Beatitudes teach that true happiness is not found in **riches** or **well-being**, in human **fame** or **power**, or in any **human achievement** – however **beneficial** it may be – such as **science**, **technology**, and **art**, or indeed in any created thing, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love.

This Beatitude **confronts us with decisive choices** concerning our lives.

- *It calls us to purify our hearts in order to seek God above all things.*
- **Read Luke 14:15-25 & 33**

Detachment

1 Corinthians 7:31 Let those who make use of this world not get bogged down in it, for the structure of this world is passing away.

CCC 226 Making good use of created things

Use everything that is not God only insofar as it brings us closer to him.

Detach ourselves from it insofar as it turns us away from Him.

St. Nicholas of Flue

My Lord and my God, take from me everything that distances me from you.

My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to you.

My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to you.

CCC 227 It means trusting God in every circumstance, even in adversity. A prayer of St. Teresa of Avila wonderfully expresses this trust:

Let nothing trouble you / Let nothing frighten you

Everything passes / God never changes

Patience / obtains all

Whoever has God / Wants for nothing

God alone is enough.

Blessed are the meek, for they will Inherit the Land

Meekness is docility to the will of God

- It is acceptance of God's will over my will
- as it is presented through the teachings of the Church
- and through the circumstances of my life.
 - Which we usually fight and become angry

The opposite to docility is hardness of heart – closed to God’s will

- We want what we want
- And when we can’t have it our way
- Either because it is against God’s law given to us through the Church
- Or because we can’t change circumstances in our life
 - We become angry and closed
 - Mark 3:1-6

When God tries to take away one of our attachments or obstacles we do two things:

1. Get angry
2. Grow closed to His will

How to become meek

- Accept what you cannot change - without getting angry.
- In this way we deny our own will
- We die to self-centeredness
- And accept God’s will.
 - As it is presented through the teachings of the Church
 - The circumstances of our life

St. Bonaventure warns: “Becoming upset and impatient over the failings of someone is like responding to his falling into a ditch by throwing oneself into another.”

By accepting what one cannot change God sculpts us into a beautiful image. When we are sinned against, when things don't go our way and it seems everything is going wrong, when sickness or trial befalls us...don't get angry or give up or lose faith...realize the Lord went through all that we go through and more; **Offer to Him** all your sufferings and frustrations...join them to His sufferings and frustrations and by this you join yourself to Him and become more like Him. THROUGH these things He is **sculpting you into a beautiful masterpiece**. The **trials** of this **life** are His **instruments** to make you into a beautiful work of art.

1 Thess 5: 16-18 Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God...for you.

Blessed are They that Mourn, for They will be Comforted.

Blessed are those that Mourn – those who admit of their sin and guilt and who desperately want to change because we are not happy. This is Repentance.

Luke 22:33, 54-62 This is what it means to “mourn”

To Mourn means:

1. Sin
2. Sorrow
3. Gain Self-Knowledge
4. Repentance and Confession
5. Get up quickly and go forward

Formation of Experience – Because of the first of the Seven deadly sins, Pride, we think we should be perfect already. It is not pleasant to our Pride to recognize and admit we have been wrong. We go forward with good will, good intentions, but in this apprenticeship of becoming more like God we have successes and failures. To refuse to admit or recognize our sin is Pride. To become discouraged, or beat oneself up over the fall, is also pride. To mourn is blessed if: We accept our falls with humility, acknowledging our errors and sins, recognizing we are not perfect on our own, that we can do no good apart from God, that He knows we are going to have falls, then to get up and go forward. For us, perfection does not consist in never falling. Rather, perfection is found in getting up quickly after a fall! The more quickly I get up after a fall – the more perfect I have become!

Have good will, the right intentions. Humbly admit when you are wrong – only Jesus and Mary were perfect. Go to Confession. Get up quickly and go forward. In this way our falls can even be a step forward since the experience and knowledge gained will help us to avoid the fall in the future. God is not keeping track of how many times you fell. He is only interested in the process of your transformation. **He allows us to fall, so that we are humbled, learn and grow.**

Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

- **Blessed are those who never give up – who do not quit**

I really want to stop committing sin

- Now is the time to exert every effort and personal struggle against sin:
 1. Daily meditation
 2. Daily examination of conscience
 3. Root out mortal and venial sin – blocks us from God
 4. Live virtue

Blessed are the Merciful for They will shall obtain Mercy

One cannot go forward without the help of a higher power

The effort of those who hunger and thirst is not sufficient to make one strong and beautiful

- Only God can do this
- Therefore – we need the Mercy of God.
- Frequent Confession
 - It is hard to go forward when we are weighed down by sin
 - To St. Faustina Jesus calls the Sacrament of Reconciliation the “Tribunal of Mercy”
- Frequent Eucharist

Matthew 18:23-35

1st we receive God’s mercy – this gives the power to do the same

2nd The surest way to receive more mercy is to show mercy to those weaker than oneself.

If you want to be filled by God you have to give like God

- Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you; good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.
- Give to do what is best for the other

In Justice, we give to others what is *rightfully theirs*. In Charity or Mercy, we give to others what is *rightfully ours*. Mercy is the Love that goes past strict justice and gives a generous gift of self. “Hessed” is the Hebrew word for mercy: a steadfast unconditional love. Matthew 5:38 - 48, "Be perfect as your Father is perfect." Luke 6:27 - 36, “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” Mercy is the perfection of love. Mercy is a love that gives unconditionally. It is a love more powerful than betrayal, and a grace stronger than sin. Mercy does not allow itself to be conquered by evil. Mercy conquers evil with good. Christ is calling us to stop worrying about what is fair; what you owe me. Stop worrying about our wounded self-love. Don’t keep track of how much you gave and how little they have given and how it is not fair. Christ is calling us to give an unconditional generous gift of self. *Mercy demands the sacrifice of self-love*. The great paradox of Matthew 10:39: Happiness is found in giving yourself away - This is the Law of the Gift.

Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Lord, teach me to be generous; teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labor and not to ask for reward; except to know that I am doing your will.

Read Mt 25: 31-46 The *Catechism* states: “Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren.” 1033

Spiritual Works of Mercy

Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting, as well as forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently.

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to brotherly love: a work of justice pleasing to God.

Blessed are the Pure of Heart for they shall see God

Temperance moderates the attraction of the pleasures of the senses and provides balance in the use of created goods.” (CCC, #1838)

- The virtue that keeps us from doing what is wrong, even if we have strong feelings for it.
- Temperance controls desires, especially for food, drink, sex
- Overindulgence in such earthly pleasures not only weakens the will, but also turns our hearts from God without temperance we replace earthly desires for the desire for God

2520 Baptism confers on its recipients the grace of purification from all sins. But the baptized must continue to struggle against concupiscence of the flesh and disordered desires. With God’s grace he will prevail

- by the virtue of *chastity* which enables us to love with an undivided heart
- *by purity of intention* in which a person seeks to find and to fulfill God’s will in everything.
- *By purity of vision*, external and internal; by discipline of feelings and imagination; by refusing to be involved in impure thoughts.
- *By prayer*: self-mastery cannot be gained by dint of mere human will-power. It must be gotten by grace obtained through prayer and sacrament.

Blessed are the Peacemakers, they will be sons of God

St. John of the Cross

“Take care to keep your heart peaceful, that no event of this world disturbs it... Even when everything down here collapses and all events go against us, it would be useless to worry ourselves because this worry takes more from us than it gives us.”

How do we maintain this peace?

1. The practice of silence which is
 - attention to the presence of God
 - attention to the presence of others
2. Confident anticipation that God will provide (Hope in God)

An excess of noise – not only in the physical sense – but also interior noise like an incessant stream of thoughts, imaginings, words heard or said, from which at times we let ourselves be trapped; these often feed our worries, our fears, our dissatisfactions... This leaves little possibility for the Spirit to be able to express Himself.

St. Catherine of Sienna

“Keep a little interior cell in our heart, in which we are in the presence of God, and in conversation with him.”

One can only gain this progressively

Fidelity to daily meditation is absolutely necessary

Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We must learn the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering.

1. Suffering purifies love and forges one into a reflection of Love Himself.
2. Suffering has Redemptive value not only for ourselves but to be used for the good of others. Our suffering united to the suffering of Christ is used by the Father to bring His grace to other souls.