

THE BEATITUDES

Ingredients For a Happy & Holy Life



2012 Men & Women's Silent Preached Retreat
3rd Presentation

Blessed Are The Poor In Spirit

- * This is not about a low self-esteem but the honesty to examine one's life in Light of The Gospel, which results in a dependence on God and a clinging to Christ.
- * The recognition that we live in a fallen world and we are not yet complete in our spiritual journey.
- * The soul is open to instruction and grace, especially in difficult moments.

SEVEN GIFTS	VIRTUES	BEATITUDES
The Kingdom		Blessed are the persecuted
Wisdom	Love	Blessed are the peacemakers
Understanding	Faith	Blessed are the pure of heart
Counsel	Prudence	Blessed are the merciful
Courage	Fortitude	Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
Knowledge	Faith	Blessed are those who mourn
Piety	Justice / Temperance	Blessed are the meek ³⁷
Fear of the Lord	Hope / Temperance	Blessed are the poor in spirit

The Gift of Hope

One who hopes in God is already united to him. The hope-filled person relies on God's mercy and is more concerned with God than the thing desired. When one leans on God, one attains God. Hope is more than wishing for a smooth drive at rush hour. Hope is more than positive thinking about something we want, for example, that a meeting will go well. Hope is the virtue of the pilgrim who journeys from the city of the world to the city of heaven. Hope is the center of gravity in the heart of the believer. Hope gives us the resilience we need when we encounter the daily and sometimes prolonged difficulties, burdens, and temptations of living the Christian life.

Bransfield p. 125

Hope & Youth

Hope therefore brings a youthfulness to the believer which renews the inner man every day (cf 2 Cor 4:16). Today, countless people rely on extracts, surgery, and wrinkle removers that restore only the appearance of youth. Hope is the fountain of youth that God applies directly to the heart: "They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength" (Is 40:31). Even the most distressing and painful events of life only serve to illumine the true character of hope. Job said that even if God would slay him, he would still trust in God (cf. Jb 13:15).

Bransfield p. 126

Poverty & Purification

Saint Peter's words to the crippled beggar at the gate (the temple reveal the importance of poverty: "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name (Jesus Christ the Nazorean, (rise and) walk" (Acts 3:6). Poverty is so important because it makes room for the full exercise (the gift of love. In our materialistic world we cannot say t the crippled "rise and walk," because we cannot say "I have neither silver nor gold." The miracle itself is a sign of self giving, not a privilege or prerogative given arbitrarily. One can receive the deep capacity for the gift of self even if one does not receive a physical healing. Poverty heals and create The room created by poverty now allows space for acceptance, of the gift. Acceptance of the gift of love is belief in the nature of love itself. Faithfulness to love is the adamant refusal to play by the old rules of self-centeredness, subtle manipulation, and entitlement brought about by the refuse to love, which is inherent in the fear and disorder of sin.

Bransfield p.135

Meekness

Humility and powerlessness do not lead to dead ends, but to secret openings. For the meek, simplicity means that they are indivisible and uncomplicated. The meek have not simply learned from their mistakes, but have been healed from those mistakes by risking the lowest place. It was only after Moses lost his high position in Egypt that he could actually learn meekness. What seemed like a setback to the world is a step up in the eyes of God. Thus, after Moses was exiled, the Book of Numbers states: "Now, Moses himself was by far the meekest man on the face of the earth" (Nm 12:3). The meek are not afraid of the ordinary, and they do not rush away from the threatening, nor cling to the familiar. They have watched as God has worked to transform their mistakes into wisdom.

Bransfield p.154

Meekness

God transforms mistakes into blessedness only in the school of suffering. Meekness bears up under evil. The humility of the meek flows from the Spirit's action within their own long-suffering. They bear hardships and sustain difficulties not as a kind of toleration, but because their principles lead them to the deepest good. They are willing to accept and carry more than their share of suffering only because of the charity of Christ. The meek feel their suffering completely, and while the feeling pains them, in faith they realize that suffering actually unites them to a deeper good-the good for which they suffer and, ultimately, therefore, to God. (continued)

Meekness

Only the meek are truly at home in their own skin. They are at rest because they have nothing to prove. The natural credibility of the meek is a relief from the excuses and entitlements of the proud. They show wisdom, though not in a know-it-all, arrogant manner. This is why the meek are easily

missed. They do not compete in the rat race. For them, competition always remains recreation. Daily life is too important to value it only for advancement and gain. Incomplete skill or knowledge is not a threat to them, but a sign of their own dependence on love. They know the feeling, deep in their psyche, of gradually trusting their own once hidden strength. They know that this strength belongs first to God.

If others do notice the meek, they are threatened by them because they do not want the same things these others chase after. Therefore, they cannot control the meek and must label them to be safe from them. But even here, the meek rest: others think about them more than they think about these others.

At this second surge of the fountain the gifts of Fear of the Lord and Piety have coalesced to nourish the Christian in the virtues of hope, temperance, and justice, and to further dislodge attachment to sin. These strengthen the believer to live as one who is poor in spirit and meek.

Bransfield p.155

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

Saint Paul speaks of this mourning and sorrow: " ... for you were saddened in a godly way, so that you did not suffer loss in anything because of us. For godly sorrow produces a salutary repentance without regret, but worldly sorrow produces death" (2 Cor 7:9a-). The person mourns the lack of time and space to make known the beauty and truth of God's goodness. The one who mourns understands faith as knowledge, which connects his awareness of everything and leads him from what he encounters in the world back to God. And in this he finds reasons for mourning. If only everything would achieve all it was meant to as a manifestation of God. He mourns that the world is so caught up with its business that it would fail to see the beauty of God. The mourning person grieves missed opportunities to follow all the events of life back to their ultimate cause. This mourning is not the pang for nostalgia, it is a strength for the future, a resolve to look for the next opportunity to learn about God.

Bransfield p.173

Hunger & Thirst For Righteousness

To avoid falling in love with material things requires real work. The finer things in life appear to bring great comfort. Yet when one pulls back the curtain, one sees that luxury leads us to a road that never truly satisfies. The more one gets of the fine things, the more one wants, and the less these things satisfy. If the finer things in life brought happiness, why would the rich and famous need rehab as often as they do? Courage gives us the strength to love true goods and to endure the absence of apparent pleasures. The one strengthened by the gift of Courage hungers for righteousness. Courage is not satisfied by crystal or filled up by the latest fashions. Courage treasures the patient pursuit of the unique and rare life of virtue itself.

Bransfield p. 186

Sloth

Sloth turns us away from the goods that lead us to God. It makes us believe that doing things for God, such as attending Mass, frequenting the Sacrament of Penance, obeying the Commandments, praying, and doing good works would be tedious and fleeting. We then begin to seek material goods and use them in unreasonable ways. Sloth is not waiting an additional day before mowing the lawn, or sleeping an extra hour on a holiday. In fact, sloth more often hides in busyness and activity than in laziness. Even something as apparently insignificant as talkativeness arises out of sloth. Proverbs tells us: "The fool's mouth is his ruin; his lips are a snare to his life" (Prv 18:7). The sins of language are not limited to foul language or profanity. Idle talk and unnecessary words are a sign of sloth. Masters of the spiritual life use strong words to describe the dangers that idle talk and gossip pose to the spiritual life. The remedy of silence brings us close to God. As the writer of Proverbs says: "He who guards his mouth protects his life; to open wide one's lips brings downfall" (Prv 13:3).

Bransfield p. 185

Blessed Are The Merciful

Mercy is not sentiment or sympathy. Mercy is not letting another off the hook or giving them a second, third, or fourth chance. Mercy prompts us to generously give to another from our own reserves of the Spirit's gifts of Fear of the Lord, Piety, Knowledge, Counsel, and Courage. Mercy is the living opposite of revenge. Mercy goes deeper than the evil that has been done and begins to love from a more profound place: the gift of self. Mercy does not teach a lesson or take the higher road; it is a new beginning of goodness. Mercy springs from deep inside the Christian. It flows from the stalwart depths of faith, hope, temperance, justice, prudence, and fortitude in the form of the gift of self. It does this even in the face of evil. This is compassion: to make a sacrificial gift of self in the face of evil, and thus to join with Christ's sacrifice. In this way he creates a new beginning of goodness right where evil has attempted to do its worst.

Bransfield p.201

Mercy & Confession

In the darkened church, the line of people sitting along the wooden pews now shortens, whittled off ... the thrill of sin so far removed, the stain so close, the reason for this risky business. The door to the confession room closes behind us and another seal surrounds us, far more permanent and unbreakable. Yet the cloistering of this conversation seems at times not to have any effect on the high-anxiety of this meeting. So many take those last few steps toward the confessional still filled with stress. They worry about such topics as, How do I start? Do I stay anonymous or sit more directly? Will I remember the Act of Contrition? Will I sound nervous? Will I remember everything? Notice the subject of each interjection-I. Each of these tracks begins a line of thought that raises blood pressure and decreases confession lines. These inner movements may be the last ditch effort of the Evil One to undo a far more splendid movement toward grace, however awkward it may be. For this covert activity he puts forward his best operative-the ego-to plead with us lest we enter the world of Christ. (continued)

Mercy & Confession

Turbulence still agitates this darkened locus of grace in which we sit. While the seal closes this conversation for all time, it simultaneously can open the hidden passages of the heart. As priest and penitent cross that perimeter, they cross something in themselves-another line deep within. Not only do they converse, but one world meets another, uncovers another. The process begins when they start to speak. Despite the fear that goes with telling one's sins, the penitent displays a certain strength, the strength of confidence. In telling the sad story of sin, the emphasis switches from the penitent's ability to "say everything" toward what he or she is really saying behind the words: "I want to go deeper My actions are not far removed, like random satellites, but reflect and announce the inmost movements of my person. How can I get in touch with this profound connection? This conversation goes beyond listing the times we lost patience, got angry, sinned sexually, cheated, stole, or took God's name in vain. Behind the well-memorized list of thoughts and actions, a pattern of wounding emerges. Sin is the symptom of a buried recklessness. We can play it safe and let the ego drive by merely skimming God's grace, making this encounter as short as possible, if not avoiding it all together. Or we can overthrow the ego and meet Christ, trusting beyond the shallows.

Bransfield pp. 197-198

Blessed Are The Persecuted

If the Christian truly lives an authentic witness to Christ, sooner rather than later a conflict will develop with those who view the world through the eyes of materialism, utilitarianism, and egoism. At times, these attitudes and ways of understanding even seep into our fellow Christians. It is one thing for the believer to be persecuted by the world; it is another to be persecuted by fellow Christians who have adapted to the duplicitous ways of the world. Even in this acute hardship, the Holy Spirit leads the believer to understand that nothing can thwart the creative and saving plan of God, who is faithful. In fact, the mystery of the cross reveals that his faithfulness intensifies even more in the midst of persecution.s Our response to trial is the simple and persistent day-to-day testimony of the life of virtue.
(continued)

Blessed Are The Persecuted

When we experience inconvenience, much less failure, trial, and persecution, we often respond with resistance, anger, and rebellion. In this way we internalize the pain and allow it to own us. We transform persecution into anger. But we can choose another option. We believe that persecution is the act of something or someone else upon us. But the Holy Spirit teaches us even in times of persecution that persecution does not act upon us; instead, we are called to act upon it. God does grant wishes, he does something incredibly more daring: he answers prayers. We see this played out in the calling and life of Moses.

Bransfield pp. 229-230