

# The Beatitudes

And The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

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[Major Reference: Rev. Servais Pinckaers, OP,  
“Sources of Christian Morality” CUA Press]



- 1. **Blessed** are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 2. **Blessed** are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- 3. **Blessed** are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
- 4. **Blessed** are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- 5. **Blessed** are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
- 6. **Blessed** are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- 7. **Blessed** are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- 8. **Blessed** are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



# The Master Gives His Sermon on the Mount

- The setting of the Sermon on the Mount is significant: “Seeing the crowds, he went **up on the mountain...**”
- The setting of Jesus’ giving the Law of the New Covenant parallels Moses’ experience on Mt. Sinai delivering God’s Old Law to Israel.
- Symbolically, St. Augustine says the mountain signifies the high standards of the New Covenant.
- The tablets of the Mosaic Law were brought down Mt. Sinai and given at the foot of the mountain as a concession to the Israelites - they were yet weak and unfit to ascend into God’s presence.



- The Old Covenant Law was thus a lower and less-perfect Law. (Exterior commands)
- The New Law, by contrast, introduces higher standards of holiness; Christ thus brings disciples up the mountain to receive his teaching.
- Jesus himself fulfills the New Law perfectly and empowers the Church to live it faithfully through the Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 11:29).
- The Beatitudes are descriptive of Christ's interior dispositions. To live the Beatitudes is to “put on” the heart of Christ.



- The Beatitudes follow a distinctive pattern and logic. Each blessing builds upon the one before it; the beatitude of spiritual poverty is thus the foundation for all of them.
- *Morally* the first seven Beatitudes correspond to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Is 11:2).
- The gifts are possessed in their fullness by Christ and are given also to the baptized (CCC 1821).
- According to this arrangement, the eighth Beatitude (5:10) summarizes the first seven.



# 1. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”

- The “poor in spirit” exercise Fear of the Lord, a gift of reverence for God that awakens the soul to its weaknesses and fosters a childlike fear of the Father (not a cowering/servile fear).
- Those keenly aware of their spiritual poverty know their need for God’s mercy. They are like the lowly of the OT, seeking only the riches of heaven (Ps 34:6).
- While this includes the powerless and the materially poor, it refers primarily to those who recognize their moral weakness.
- With a *humble* spirit, they live detached from earthly goods and thus seek the kingdom.



## 2. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”

- Those who “mourn” exercise knowledge, the gift that imparts a correct perception of created things and their relative value before God.
- Being “poor in spirit,” these lament mankind’s earthly plight.
- They recognize that one cannot, with human effort alone, reach the blessedness of heaven.
- Disciples who *mourn* are likewise troubled by the injustices of the world and grieve over their sins (Ps 51:17; Is 61:2).



### 3. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”

- The meek person is a humble “doer” of God’s will. They exercise piety, the gift of filial love for God that moves the soul to worship and protects against the hardening of one’s heart in the midst of trials.
- Meekness is not weakness, but *humility and faith* in God especially during trials. The *meek* maintain serenity and self-control through difficult circumstances.
- Moses exemplified this virtue more than any other in the OT. It too is preeminently the characteristic of Jesus (11:29), who obeyed the Father’s will unto death.
- ***Shall inherit the earth***: A blessing similar to Ps 37:11, which offered the Promised Land to the meek of ancient Israel.



## 4. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied”

- Those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness” exercise might (fortitude), the gift of firm resolution to pursue holiness despite obstacles.
- The “meek” are not satisfied with earth but long for heavenly inheritance. They strive to secure it through holiness and obedience to God.
- **Righteousness:** the gift of sonship and inheritance in God’s covenant family. Those adopted by God desire his will to be known and fulfilled in their lives.
- **Shall be satisfied:** Those who seek and desire God’s righteousness receive it as a heavenly gift (cf. 6:33, 7:7; Rom 5:17).



## 5. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

- The “merciful” exercise counsel, the gift that assists decision making and helps to guard against rashness; as an interior guide.
- It assists one to counsel others and to extend compassion to them.
- Those “satisfied” with God’s righteousness and mercy long to extend that gift to others.
- They imitate God by forgiving their neighbor and seeking to remedy material and spiritual injustices in the world (CCC 2447) - works of mercy.



## 6. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

- Clarity, wholeness, at the core of one’s being. The “pure in heart” exercise understanding, the gift of insight into the mysteries of faith.
- It is not a mere intellectual understanding but the spiritual perceptions of the heart.
- For the Ancient Hebrews, the heart signified the center of the person and the source of love and obedience - it was the origin of every act and decision.
- Having obtained “mercy, the pure of heart are given clear spiritual vision for single-minded devotion.”
- **They shall see God:** The inwardly pure behold God in the simplicity of faith. They will see him “face to face in heaven”(1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2, CCC 2517-2519).



## 7. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God”

- The “peacemakers” exercise wisdom, the fit contemplation, reflection on - and love for - divine things.
- It enables one to assess the world by revealed truths and instills peace in the soul. In the Bible, God’s peace (*Shalom*) is the interpersonal harmony established by covenant relationships.
- More than a mere absence of conflict, true peace stems from reconciliation with God (2 Cor 5:18-20), forgiveness of sins.
- The “pure in heart” already stand in God’s peace as his children. They seek to extend his gift to others by advancing the gospel (CCC 2305).



## 8. **“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”**

- **Those who are persecuted:** the “peacemakers” who spread the Gospel inevitably encounter persecution.
- Jesus envisions New Covenant disciples in line with the Old Covenant prophets, many of whom were abused and killed by their kinsmen.
- They suffered maltreatment for their unwavering fidelity to God and their denunciation of personal and social evil.



# *The Beatitudes - Model for Christian Living*

- The Beatitudes in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, according to St. Augustine, form the model for Christian morality.
- It should not be isolated from the rest of revealed moral teaching, but seen as the fulfillment of all its precepts.
- Augustine found further perfection in the sevenfold form of the Sermon, seven being a number of perfection of plenitude.
- He saw Psalm 12 referring to the Lord's word seven times refined, as fitting the seven Beatitudes summarized in the eighth.
- Also he connects the seven petitions of the "Our Father." The Jerusalem bible notes: "The Lord's prayer in St. Matthew's form has seven petitions."
- The number is a favorite of Matthew's: "2x7 generations; 7 beatitudes; 7 parables; forgiveness not 7 but 77 times; 7 woes for the Pharisees; 7 sections into which the Gospel is divided."



## *The Beatitudes, Seven Stages in the Christian Life*

- Stages leading the Christian from humility or poverty in spirit to wisdom and vision of God. The Beatitudes affect the entire life of a Christian.
- Two major experiences are coordinated here: conversion first, (found in the first three Beatitudes), then the search for wisdom (from the fourth to the seventh).
- This is the spiritual journey, stages are not isolated, but bring out in ordered progression the principle elements of a Christian's life.
- The Beatitudes give us Christ's answer to the primary human question about happiness, which is at the origin of the search for wisdom.

# *The Beatitudes and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*

- St. Augustine makes the connection b/t the Beatitudes and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11. By doing so he attributed the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the very Christians to whom the Beatitudes are addressed (us).
- The connection shows that the Christian cannot follow the way of the Beatitudes without the grace of the Holy Spirit accompanying each stage of the journey.
- The Christian life is a one lived according to the Beatitudes by the help of the Holy Spirit.
- Main theme: The ongoing action of the Holy Spirit as the Christian pursues his course from beginning to end along the way of Beatitudes.
- Augustine's text does not give the slightest evidence of any distinction between morality and spirituality. No one claim to be "spiritual but not religious." The presence of the Spirit is evident in the fruits of virtue and charity.