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CHAPTER 2

Jesus' Response Our Response

AT THE HEART OF JESUS'
PREACHING

SUCCINCT SUMMARY OF
CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

RESPOND TO OUR DESIRE
FOR HAPPINESS

DEPICT THE FACE OF CHRIST

THE BEATITUDES

ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS
OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

PURIFY OUR HEARTS TO
LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL
THINGS

PORTRAY CHRIST'S LOVE
FOR HIS FATHER

PORTRAY CHRIST'S LOVE
FOR HUMANITY

REVEAL THE GOAL TO
WHICH GOD CALLS US

THE BEATITUDES ARE AT THE HEART OF JESUS' teaching; they portray the face of Christ and his love for his Father and for humanity. In this chapter we deepen our understanding of the Beatitudes, which are the attitudes and actions characteristic of the Christian life. We explore what it means for us to discern and freely choose to live the Beatitudes by responding to God the Father's will as Christ did.

BLESSED ARE:

THE POOR IN SPIRIT

THOSE WHO MOURN

THE MEEK

THOSE WHO HUNGER AND
THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

THE MERCIFUL

THE PURE IN HEART

THE PEACEMAKERS

THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED
FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE

THOSE WHO ARE REVEILED
PERSECUTED ON JESUS' ACCOUNT

Faith Focus: These teachings of the Catholic Church are the primary focus of the doctrinal content presented in this chapter:

- Ⓞ There is an unbreakable connection between the moral life and the human search for happiness—for goodness, truth and beauty.
- Ⓞ The Beatitudes respond to the desire for happiness that God has placed in the human heart.
- Ⓞ The Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus' preaching; they depict the 'face' of Jesus and portray his love.
- Ⓞ The Beatitudes shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life.
- Ⓞ The Beatitudes purify our hearts to love God above all things.
- Ⓞ The Beatitudes confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods.
- Ⓞ The Beatitudes teach the final end to which God the Father calls us, namely, the Kingdom that Jesus Christ inaugurated.

Discipleship Formation: As a result of studying this chapter and discovering the meaning of the faith of the Catholic Church for your life, you should be better able to:

- Ⓞ grow in your conviction of God's love for you in both 'good' times and 'bad' times;
- Ⓞ discern the real difference between true happiness and 'pretenders' to happiness;
- Ⓞ discover the Sermon on the Mount as the blueprint for living your life in Christ;
- Ⓞ understand humility as strength of character and commit yourself to living a life of humility;
- Ⓞ commit yourself to working for justice;
- Ⓞ find the joy that comes from living a life of self-sacrificing love.

Scripture References: These Scripture references are quoted or referred to in this chapter:

OLD TESTAMENT: Exodus 3:7, 19:20; Deuteronomy 10:17–18; Psalms 1:1, 24:4–5, 34:8, 37:1–11, 65:4, 99:4, 103:8, 128:1; Isaiah 1:10–20, 55:8, 58:6–7, 61:1–11; Jeremiah 3:10; Amos 2:6–7, 5:24; Micah 6:8

NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew 4:17, 5:1–7:29, 10:38, 15:7–9, 16:24, 23:37–39, 25:34–40; Mark 8:34, 10:21; Luke 2:14, 4:16–19, 6:20–26 and 17–49, 9:23, 14:27, 16:13; John 11:3 and 17–44, 13:1–17 and 33–38, 14:6, 20:19; Romans 12:1–21; Galatians 6:12; Ephesians 2:4; Philipppians 2:1–11; Colossians 1:20; 1 Timothy 1:14; 1 John 4:8, 19

Faith Glossary: Familiarize yourself with the meaning of these key terms. Definitions are found in the Glossary: **agape**, **beatitude**, **Beatitudes**, **Beatific Vision**, **compassion**, **Divine Providence**, **hope**, **humility**, **kenosis**, **materialism**, **New Law**, **Sermon on the Mount**, **Sermon on the Plain**, **Twelve (the)**, **virtue**

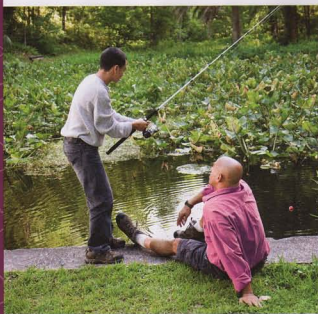
Faith Word: humility

Learn by Heart: The Beatitudes

Learn by Example: St. Maria Faustina, Apostle of Mercy

ATTEND AND REFLECT

How should we respond to God, who is Love?



OPENING REFLECTION

- ⊗ Think about people whom you know love you.
 - How do you know that they love you?
 - How do you generally respond to the love that you experience?
- ⊗ Think about the people whom you love.
 - What do you do that is a sign for them that you love them?
 - How do you find others whom you love responding to you?

GOD'S LOVE FOR US

In the Credo text *Son of God and Son of Mary* you learned about the love that is the inner life of the Blessed Trinity. You learned that the Triune God—God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is one God in three divine Persons who is a divine community of self-giving love.

Divine love is a mystery beyond our comprehension. In the First Letter of John we read:

'God is love' (1 John 4:8). The Greek word for love used in this passage is *agape*. **Agape** is a love that is *totally self-giving*; it is the selfless, self-emptying love (which the New Testament describes as *kenosis*) revealed and lived by Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God. It is love that does not expect anything in return. (Read Philipians 2:1–11.)

Jesus' awareness of and confidence in his Father's love was such that he freely took upon himself his suffering and dying on the Cross. Jesus' love redeemed and restored us to a life lived in the love of God—the holiness of life that Adam and Eve rejected.

We are called to love as Jesus loved and as God loves. We are called to love with a totally self-giving love. When we open our hearts to the Spirit of Love and live the way of love revealed in the Person and life of Jesus (see John 13:1–17, 33–38), we live in 'the spiritual freedom of the children of God' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], no. 1828). When we do, we can come to know and experience the joy and **beatitude** (blessedness) that God wills and desires for us, both now and in the **Beatific Vision** when we will enjoy the presence of God, face-to-face, after death.

THINK, PAIR AND SHARE

- ⊗ What passages can you recall and name in the four accounts of the Gospel that reveal, in concrete ways, what God's love looks like?
- ⊗ Which of these is your favorite passage, and why?
- ⊗ Share your reflections with a partner.

WHAT ABOUT YOU PERSONALLY?

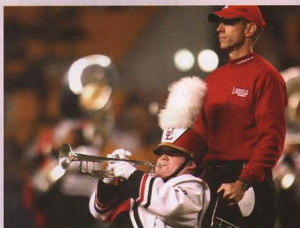
- ⊗ What experiences of God's love mean most to you in your life right now?
- ⊗ How do you respond to the conviction that God shows his love for you in these and many other ways?



Recognizing God's love in 'unexpected places'

Patrick Henry Hughes was born without eyes and with scoliosis and a tightening of his joints which left him physically challenged for life. As a child, Patrick was fitted with artificial eyes and had two steel rods surgically attached to his spine to correct the scoliosis. Despite such challenges, Patrick managed to excel as a musician and student. Before his first birthday, he had discovered the piano. His mom recalls, 'I could hit any note on the piano, and within one or two tries, he'd get it.' By his second birthday, Patrick was playing such tunes as 'You Are My Sunshine' and 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star'. His father was ecstatic, commenting, 'We might not ever play baseball, but we can play music together.'

In spite of being wheelchair-dependent all his life, with the help of his dad Patrick went on to participate in the University of Louisville Marching Band. There he excelled in Spanish language studies and as a virtuoso pianist, vocalist and trumpet player. Even more than



his unbelievable achievements is Patrick's 'attitude of gratitude' which has inspired others. He talks to people about his life and about how blessed he is. Not ignoring or overlooking his challenges, he says, 'God gave me the ability . . . the musical gifts I have and the great opportunity to meet new people.'

JOURNAL EXERCISE

- ⊗ What wisdom for your own life have you gleaned from Patrick Henry Hughes' story?
- ⊗ What signs of God's love for you can you find in the challenges you face in your own life?

FROM THE CATECHISM

The Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus' preaching and they take up and fulfill the promises that God made starting with Abraham. They depict the very countenance of Jesus and they characterize authentic Christian life. They reveal the ultimate goal of human activity, which is eternal happiness.

—*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 360

THE BEATITUDES: THE ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The **Beatitudes** proclaim Jesus' attitude to life in the world. Our whole life, including our moral life, is focused on and in Jesus. 'The Beatitudes are

at the heart of Jesus' preaching' (CCC, no. 1716). They teach us the final end to which God calls us: the Kingdom, the vision of God, participation in the very life and love of God, our identity as the beloved, adopted daughters and sons of God, and eternal life and rest in God.

The Beatitudes appear in the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew and Luke. In Matthew they are part of the **Sermon on the Mount** (Matthew 5:1–7:29) and in Luke they are part of the **Sermon on the Plain** (Luke 6:17–49). Here is Matthew's listing of the Beatitudes:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

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

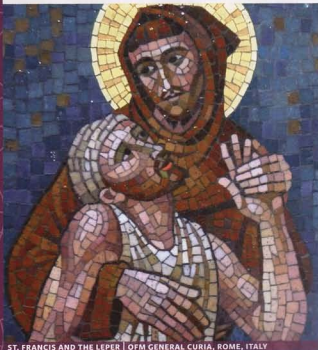
Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

—Matthew 5:3–12

In his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus makes it very clear that God's way of thinking is not our way of thinking; our ways of acting are not always God's way of acting. (Read Isaiah 55:8.) God's ways can be radically different from the values and standards that the world recommends as the source of our 'happiness'. (We will explore the Sermon on the Mount in more detail in the next section of this chapter.)

TALK IT OVER

Read and reflect on each of the Beatitudes.



ST. FRANCIS AND THE LEPER | OFM GENERAL CURIA, ROME, ITALY

- ⊗ What is your immediate response to each Beatitude?
- ⊗ Who are the 'people' described in the Beatitudes whom you would consider blessed by God? Why do you think these people might be considered 'blessed' or 'not blessed'?

OVER TO YOU

- ⊗ In what ways have you come to know Pope Francis to be a 'Beatitude' person?
- ⊗ How does he model for you living an authentic Christian life?

LET'S PROBE DEEPER

The Hebrew and Greek words for 'beatitude' have been translated into English as both 'happy' and 'blessed'. The word 'happy' is open to many interpretations, and often these are subjective, depending on an individual's experience and expectations. What makes one person happy may not do so for another. The word 'blessed' names the gifts of joy and happiness that come from faith and the conviction of being loved by God. Through his teaching on the Beatitudes Jesus reveals the *good and true way*—his way—of our being in the world. These eight fundamental *attitudes and actions* provide the focus for our attitude toward the world and how God creates us to act in the world. When we are true to our origin and purpose we are among those people whom Scripture identifies as 'blessed'; those who know the joy that brings true happiness.

REFLECT AND SHARE

- ⊗ Read and compare the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:3–12 with the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6:20–26.
- ⊗ What do you recognize as major similarities and major differences?
- ⊗ Why do you think Luke adds the section from verse 24 to 26, which contains a list of woes?

JOURNAL EXERCISE

- ⊗ Name the Beatitude that speaks most clearly to your life right now.
- ⊗ Describe how living according to this Beatitude makes a difference to your life, and to the lives of other people.

HEAR THE STORY

We are called to be 'blessed'

OPENING ACTIVITY

- ⑩ Conduct a class vox pop asking: 'What do you think is the best way to become the person God wants you to be?' and 'What do you imagine you still need to learn in order to be able to do this?'

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matthew situates the Sermon on the Mount on the side of a mountain. In the Old Testament, a 'mountain' is a symbol for the presence of God; it is where God often speaks to his people; for example, we read, 'When the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai . . . the Lord summoned Moses to the top of the mountain' (Exodus 19:20). In locating the Sermon on the Mount on a mountain, Matthew is teaching that Jesus has come to fulfill and not to abolish the Law and the Prophets. (Pause and read Matthew 5:17–20.)

The Sermon on the Mount has been described as 'the blueprint' for Christian living. It summarizes the **New Law**, the law of the Gospel, which Jesus taught and lived. The New Law is the Law of Love because it calls us to act out of love for God and for one another. It is the Law of Grace because it gives us the grace of the Sacraments to help us to live out of love. It is the Law of Freedom because it frees us from the status of servant, as in the Old Law of the Old Testament, to the status of Children of God. The teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount are a succinct summary of Christian discipleship. The whole Sermon portrays the vision of Jesus for his disciples. Being a disciple of Jesus involves formation in fundamental attitudes and actions, that is, conforming to a certain way of being in the world. Imagine how empowering it must have been for the people listening to Jesus, many of whom were the 'poor' of his time, as they



THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT | CHRISTIAN ROHLFS

heard his words, 'You are the salt of the earth. . . . You are the light of the world' (Matthew 5:13 and 14). Imagine how uplifted they must have been that they could be such salt and light by obeying and teaching God's Commandments, avoiding sin, being reconciled as needed, living faithful lives, turning the other cheek instead of seeking revenge, going the extra mile, loving even enemies, caring for the needy, praying and fasting regularly, depending on **Divine Providence** instead of on possessions, and judging all with kindness.

As the Sermon draws to a close, Jesus gives them 'the golden rule' for finding happiness and joy in life. He teaches, 'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets' (Matthew 7:12).



ST. MATTHEW | ABRAHAM BLOEMAERT

LET'S PROBE DEEPER: SCRIPTURE ACTIVITY

- ⊗ Read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1—7:29 with a partner.
- ⊗ Choose three moral teachings that stand out for you and share your thoughts about them.

OVER TO YOU

- ⊗ What might these teachings mean for the lives of young people today?

LITERARY FORM AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

A beatitude is a form of Hebrew poetry found in several books of the Old Testament. (Check out Psalms 1:1, 34:8, 65:4, 128:1.) This form of Hebrew poetry does not use rhyming words, as you might be used to reading in some forms of poetry; instead, it uses what might be called rhyming ideas, which serve to facilitate memorizing the

verses. A biblical beatitude is 'an exclamation of congratulations that recognizes an existing state of happiness. . . . Here the gospel begins with a cry of joy, based on the nearness of the Kingdom of God' (*The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 42:24).

Biblical scholars agree that it is unlikely that Jesus delivered this 'sermon', word for word, at one time and in one place, as it appears in Matthew's Gospel account. The teachings in the Sermon are so vast that an audience hearing it for the first time and all at once would certainly struggle to grasp its full meaning.

Matthew, one of the **Twelve**, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wove together a summary of Jesus' most important teachings and placed them at the beginning of his Gospel account as a prelude for what was to come. These teachings, which were first passed on by word of mouth (oral tradition), were eventually written during the third stage of the formation of the Gospel, and were recognized by the Church as authentic and included in the canon of Scripture.

THE BEATITUDES FOR US TODAY: THE HEART OF JESUS' TEACHING

In the Sermon on the Mount, and in particular in the Beatitudes, Jesus invites us to see life as a blessing. Such a worldview sees the world as God sees it. It provides us with the truth that our life is 'good' and rooted in God's love for us.

God 'first loved us' (1 John 4:19). We are truly 'blessed'. St. Basil the Great (c. AD 330–379), one of the Eastern Fathers and a Doctor of the Church, put it this way:

If we turn away from evil out of fear of punishment, we are in the position of slaves. If we pursue the enticement of wages . . . we resemble mercenaries. Finally if we obey for the sake of the good itself and out of love for him who commands . . . we are in the position of children.

—St. Basil, *The Rule of St. Basil*, prologue, 3; quoted in CCC, no. 1828

JOURNAL EXERCISE

- ⊗ Summarize the best thing you have learned so far from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

The Beatitudes and God's free gift of joy

The Beatitudes turn much of conventional human thinking upside down. How can the 'poor in spirit', those who 'mourn', 'the meek', 'those who are 'persecuted for righteousness' sake' and 'reviled on Jesus' account' be blessed, be happy, be filled with 'joy'?

OPENING REFLECTION

- ☉ Reread the Beatitudes in the first section of this chapter. What do you honestly think of such claims and promises?
- ☉ How willing and ready are you personally to accept those claims?

FROM THE CATECHISM

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 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, no. 1717

JESUS REVEALS THE NATURE OF TRUE HAPPINESS

The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness that God has placed in the human heart. They reveal the goal of human existence to which God calls us. Let's take a closer look at the actions and attitudes revealed in each of the Beatitudes. They 'confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods; they purify our hearts in order to teach us to love God above all things' (CCC, no. 1728).

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

The 'poor in spirit' are not necessarily the economically poor. Jesus does not bless economic poverty, but commands us to work to alleviate it and the suffering associated with it.

In the Scriptures the 'poor in spirit' are all those who keep God at the center of their life and have absolute trust in him. The **virtue of humility** is the foundation of their life. Humility is the 'virtue by which a Christian acknowledges that God is the author of all good. Humility avoids inordinate ambition or pride, and provides the foundation for turning to God in prayer.



Voluntary humility can be described as “poverty of spirit” (CCC, Glossary).

The actions and attitudes of the ‘poor in spirit’ reveal the emptiness of the deceit of **materialism**, which drives one to pursue and turn created goods into idols, into ‘gods’. In Luke’s Sermon on the Plain Jesus teaches, ‘No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth’ (Luke 16:13). He admonishes those who choose to focus their lives on the pursuit of wealth or on anything or anyone other than God—no matter what its form.



MOURNER | 15TH-CENTURY TOMB SCULPTURE

FAITH WORD

Humility

The virtue by which a Christian acknowledges that God is the author of all good. Humility avoids inordinate ambition or pride, and provides the foundation for turning to God in prayer. Voluntary humility can be described as ‘poverty of spirit’.

—CCC, Glossary

OVER TO YOU

- ① What people do you recognize to be ‘poor in spirit’?
- ② Do you see the qualities of ‘the poor in spirit’ in your own attitudes and actions? Why is that?

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted’ (Matthew 5:4):

In the Psalms, mourning is often connected to sorrow for sin and its consequences on one’s personal life and on society. People who mourn experience a sense of sadness not only over their own personal suffering and sin, but also over the suffering and sin of others, especially the sinful and oppressive structures of society. For example, Jesus mourned (wept) over the city of Jerusalem for turning its back on God and the Covenant: ‘Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you, desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord”’ (Matthew 23:37–39).

LET’S PROBE DEEPER

Jesus joined Martha and Mary and mourned over the loss of their brother, Lazarus (see John 11:33–35). Through his words and actions Jesus, the Son of God made flesh, reveals that God is our



ECCE HOMO | EGLISE SAINT-PIERRE-LE-VIEUX, ALSACE, FRANCE

companion during our times of mourning. Jesus' action transformed Martha's and Mary's sorrow into joy. In our times of sorrow, disappointment or bereavement, we too can know and experience the comfort of the compassionate God with us.

- ☉ Read and reflect on John 11:17–44.
- ☉ Share with a partner your insights on how 'mourning' can be transformed into joy.

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth' (Matthew 5:5):

The word 'meek' is often used to describe a person as 'weak'. This usage in English is contrary to its use in the Scriptures. In the Scriptures 'meek' is often translated as 'slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love' (Psalm 103:8). 'Meekness' is an attribute of God that Jesus calls his disciples to 'image' in their lives. The meek are gentle and generous; they are forgiving, even of their enemies (check out Matthew 5:43–44) and treat others with kindness, **compassion** and

In the Scriptures 'meek' is often translated as 'slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love'

tenderness (check out Matthew 5:21–26). Their words and actions manifest non-violence; not only do they 'not kill', but they avoid acting out of anger, hatred and vengeance. The meek will 'inherit the earth'—the goodness God wills for all people.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

- ☉ Read Psalm 37:1–11. Recall a time when you 'refrained from anger' and treated people with gentleness and kindness.
- ☉ How was that an expression of your strength of character?
- ☉ What response did you receive? How did you feel about the reaction?



'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled' (Matthew 5:6):

The Hebrew word *sedeqah* and the Greek *dikaosyne* can be translated as 'righteousness' or 'justice'. So this Beatitude can be translated as 'blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice'—those who hunger to live according to God's original plan of holiness and justice for his creation; who seek to live in right relationship with God and others. Authentic disciples of Jesus hunger for justice, fairness and equality in the world, as Jesus did (reread Luke 4:16–19; then check out Isaiah 61:1–11). To work for justice is to embrace what God wills and desires for everyone. Those who 'hunger and thirst for righteousness'

work with the Holy Spirit to bring about the Kingdom that Jesus inaugurated.

LET'S PROBE DEEPER: SCRIPTURE ACTIVITY

- ① Look up and quietly read Exodus 3:7, Deuteronomy 10:17–18, Isaiah 58:6–7, Amos 2:6–7 and 5:24, Micah 6:8 and Psalm 99:4.
- ② What do these passages say about justice, or righteousness?
- ③ In light of these Old Testament passages, what does this Beatitude teach us as we strive for justice in our world today?

'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy' (Matthew 5:7):

Human misery is a universal sign of the consequence of Original Sin and the need for

salvation and healing of our human condition. Throughout his ministry the Lord, who freely took upon himself our human condition, constantly identified himself with people who were suffering from sin and other evils and he addressed their misery. The Church since her beginning, at the command of Christ, has done the same.

St. Thomas Aquinas taught that the virtue of mercy is second only to love in the Christian life. God is a God of mercy who is 'rich in mercy' (Ephesians 2:4). Mercy is the generous, practical expression of undeserved love. Those who are merciful do not judge others harshly (check out Matthew 7:1–5); they love the sinner and hate the sin, and they forgive those who trespass against them (Lord's Prayer).

Concern for others is a characteristic of a disciple of Christ. As disciples of Jesus we are called to love our neighbor, especially those most

in need, because of our love for God (check out Matthew 6:1–4).

'Hence, those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation, through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere' [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, 68].

—CCC, no. 2448

JOURNAL EXERCISE

- ① Write about a time when you showed mercy or had mercy shown to you. Try to articulate what wisdom you learned from that experience.

Those who are merciful do not judge others harshly; they love the sinner and hate the sin



THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY | GUERCINO

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God' (Matthew 5:8):

Take a moment and read Psalm 24:4–5, Isaiah 1:10–20 and Jeremiah 3:10. The 'pure in heart' keep their eyes on God. They desire to please God and to do the will of God above everything else. They strive for a perfect correspondence between their inner thoughts and desires and their external actions, and between their worship of God and their moral life. Jesus admonished the Pharisees about separating our 'heart' from our actions:

"You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said:

*"This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines."*

—Matthew 15:7–9



THE RISEN CHRIST | GIAN LORENZO BERNINI

The divine promise to the pure in heart is that they will glimpse the face of God now and will enter into the joy of seeing God face to face eternally after death. St. Irenaeus captured the heart of the promise when he wrote: 'Because of God's love and goodness toward us, and because he can do all things, he goes so far as to grant those who love him the privilege of seeing him' (quoted in CCC, no. 1722).

READ, REFLECT AND SHARE

- ⊗ With a partner, read Matthew 25:34–40.
- ⊗ How might you 'catch a glimpse' of God now?

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God' (Matthew 5:9):

The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, points to all the goodness, all the best, that God wills and desires for us. This Beatitude teaches that disciples of Jesus, who have become adopted children of God through Baptism, are called to bring about this reality. When the angels first announced the birth of Jesus, they said he brought 'on earth peace' (Luke 2:14). The first words the risen Christ said when he appeared to his disciples were, 'Peace be with you' (John 20:19). 'Peacemakers' work to make peace in every situation of violence, tension or division—as Jesus, the Prince of Peace, did and as the Spirit of Jesus continues to do. They work to reconcile people with God and with one another. (See Colossians 1:20.)

The first words the risen Christ said when he appeared to his disciples were, 'Peace be with you.'



Have you ever been put down for your religious beliefs or for acting on those beliefs?

READ, REFLECT AND SHARE

- ☉ Reflect on these words of Blessed John Paul II, who was Pope from October 16, 1978 to his death on April 2, 2005: 'Wherever the strong exploit the weak; wherever the rich take advantage of the poor . . . there the work of making peace is undone.'
- ☉ Let the Pope's words speak to your heart.
- ☉ Share your reflections with the class.

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 5:10):

Jesus clearly taught that there is a cost to being his disciple. The authentic disciple of Jesus will accept carrying the Cross (see Matthew 10:38,

16:24; Mark 8:34, 10:21; Luke 9:23, 14:27; Galatians 6:12); this will include being persecuted, as Jesus was persecuted.

Pope Francis in his first homily on March 14, 2013 echoed the words of Christ. The Pope said, 'When we walk without the Cross, when we build without the Cross, and when we profess Christ without the Cross, we are not disciples of the Lord.' Jesus began his public ministry by announcing, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near' (Matthew 4:17). When we suffer in the cause of justice, we work to bring about the 'kingdom of heaven'.

JOURNAL EXERCISE

- ☉ Have you ever been put down for your religious beliefs or for acting on those beliefs? Have you ever not acted on those beliefs for fear of being 'put down'? Write about these experiences.
- ☉ Describe how the insights you have gained from studying the Beatitudes might help you 'stand up for your faith in Christ' in the future.

What it means to live the Beatitudes

START



CAN LOSERS REALLY BE WINNERS?

This is an extract from a homily Blessed Pope John Paul II addressed to young people on the Mount of Beatitudes in March 2000.

It is strange that Jesus exalts those whom the world generally regards as weak. He says to them, 'Blessed are you who seem to be losers, because you are the true winners: the kingdom of heaven is yours!' These words present a challenge which demands a deep and abiding *metanoia* of the spirit, a great change of heart. You young people will understand why this change of heart is necessary! Because you

are aware of another voice within you and all around you, a contradictory voice. It is a voice which says, 'Blessed are the proud and violent, those who prosper at any cost, who are unscrupulous, pitiless, devious, who make war not peace, and persecute those who stand in their way'. And this voice seems to make sense in a world where the violent often triumph and the devious seem to succeed. 'Yes', says the voice of evil, 'they are the ones who win. Happy are they!'

OPENING REFLECTION

- ⊗ What sense does Blessed John Paul II's message make to you? How willing are you to be called 'A Loser' in order to be 'A Winner' for Christ?
- ⊗ Write your thoughts in your journal.

BE GLAD AND REJOICE IN THE LORD

Matthew's listing of the Beatitudes concludes with this final Beatitude:

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

—Matthew 5:11

Christians are people whose faith and love are strengthened by **hope**. Hope is a gift of God; along with faith and love it is one of the three Theological Virtues. Hope is 'the theological virtue by which we desire and expect from God both eternal life and the grace we need to attain it' (CCC, Glossary). Hope gives us the strength to cooperate with the grace of the Holy Spirit to transform our life, our attitudes and actions, and

truly become 'Beatitude' people. Hope deepens our faith and commitment to 'love' as Jesus loved and commanded us to love—even when that may not be the popular thing to do.

JESUS CALLS US TO LIVE THE BEATITUDES

Jesus' teaching in the Beatitudes is crystal clear: '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 creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love' (CCC, no 1723).

Putting your faith and hope in Jesus means choosing to believe in him and in what he teaches—no matter how costly it may be. It means recognizing the deceit of evil and rejecting the claims of evil, no matter how sensible or attractive or wise and good they may seem.

We learned earlier in this chapter: 'The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ' (CCC, no. 1717). Jesus does not merely speak the Beatitudes, he lives the Beatitudes. Jesus is the Beatitudes made flesh. Looking

at Christ and the mystery of his whole life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension, we see what it means to be 'poor in spirit', to 'mourn', to be 'meek', to 'hunger and thirst for righteousness', to be 'merciful', to be 'pure in heart', to be 'peacemakers', to be 'persecuted for righteousness' sake', and 'reviled' on his account.

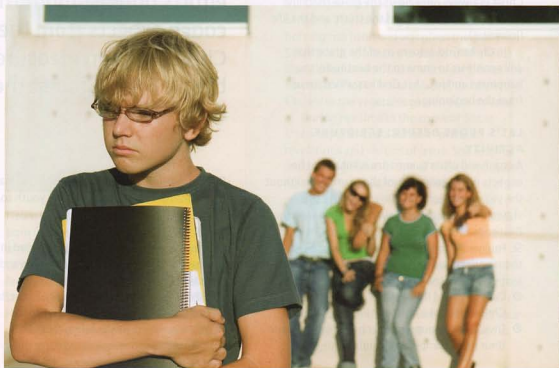
THINK, PAIR AND SHARE

- ① Look through the Gospels. Find examples of Jesus living each of the Beatitudes.
- ② Share your findings with a partner.

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

We have the ability to meet the challenge of living a life of holiness and justice because we have received the gift of God's grace. As St. Paul, who knew he had been a sinner, said to Timothy, 'I received mercy . . . and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus' (1 Timothy 1:14). So it is for us. We, too, have received God's grace to enable us to live as Jesus asks us to.

In the Beatitudes Jesus teaches the fundamental attitudes and actions that undergird the moral choices we make to live the 'life in





Christ' that we were incorporated into, professed and promised to live at Baptism. The Spirit of Christ is always offering us the grace to follow Jesus, who is 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (John 14:6).

In Christ God assures us of the grace that will enable us to come to the beatitude, the happiness and joy, that God has willed for us from the beginning.

LET'S PROBE DEEPER: SCRIPTURE ACTIVITY

A coach will often summarize what she or he expects of the members of the team. Throughout the year the coach and players will use this statement to measure their efforts. In a way, the Beatitudes serve a similar purpose for Christians. St. Paul wrote to the Church in Rome to help them understand and measure how we are to live as members of the Body of Christ.

- ⊙ Carefully read Romans 12, 'The New Life in Christ', and take note of its main points.
- ⊙ Divide into groups; ask each member to share their most compelling insights.

A team can measure their efforts against what the coach expects from them; Christians can measure their efforts against the Beatitudes

- ⊙ Conclude with what you think this passage means for the lives of Christian youth today.

OVER TO YOU

- ⊙ How do you think what you have read in this chapter can influence your attitudes and actions?
- ⊙ What might change in the way of your 'being' in the world?
- ⊙ What will help you to bring about that change?

JUDGE AND ACT

REFLECT ON WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

Look back over this chapter and reflect on the teachings of Scripture and Tradition on the Beatitudes. Share your understanding of the teaching of the Catholic Church on these statements:

- ☉ There is an unbreakable connection between the moral life and the human search for happiness—for goodness, truth and beauty.
- ☉ The Beatitudes respond to the desire for happiness that God has placed in the human heart.
- ☉ The Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus' preaching; they depict the 'face' of Jesus and portray his love.

- ☉ The Beatitudes purify our hearts to love God above all things.
- ☉ The Beatitudes shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life.
- ☉ The Beatitudes confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods.
- ☉ The Beatitudes teach the final end to which God calls us, namely, the Kingdom that Jesus Christ inaugurated.

REFLECT AND DISCERN

- ☉ What wisdom have you learned for your life from this chapter?

LEARN BY EXAMPLE

St. Maria Faustina, Apostle of Mercy



Helen Kowalksa, St. Maria Faustina, was born in a small village west of Lodz, Poland on August 25, 1905. She was the third of ten children. She came from a very poor family that had struggled hard on a small farm during the terrible years of World War I. Having had only three years of very basic education, at the age of fifteen she started work as a housekeeper to support her family.

When she was almost twenty, Helen entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. The following year she received her religious habit and was given the name Sister Maria, to which she added 'of the Most Blessed Sacrament'. Sister Maria performed the humblest of tasks in the convent, usually in the kitchen or the vegetable garden or as a porter.

During her time in the convent Sister Maria experienced a series of private revelations and visions of Jesus. She recalled Jesus saying to her in one of these apparitions, 'My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity' (*Diary of Saint Maria Faustina*, 699). Jesus asked her to model in her own life the mercy of God. This would remind people that if they wanted divine mercy for themselves, they had to be merciful to others. Sister Maria took to heart the Gospel command to 'be merciful even as your heavenly Father is merciful' and she lived as 'an apostle of mercy'.

Sister Maria Faustina died of tuberculosis in Krakow, Poland, on October 5, 1938. Blessed Pope John Paul II beatified her in 1993 and canonized her in 2000. On the day of Sister Maria's canonization, the Pope also officially instituted the Feast of the Divine Mercy, which the Catholic Church celebrates on the Second Sunday of Easter.

The Catholic Church also celebrates the memory and the life of St. Maria Faustina on October 5. The message of mercy that St. Maria Faustina lived and taught is now being spread throughout the world. Her diary, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, has become the handbook for devotion to Divine Mercy.

TALK IT OVER

- What is the best spiritual wisdom that you have learned for your life from the story of St. Maria Faustina?

SHARE YOUR FAITH WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- Pope Francis, in his first Angelus address to over 100,000 pilgrims in St. Peter's Square, said: 'A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just.'

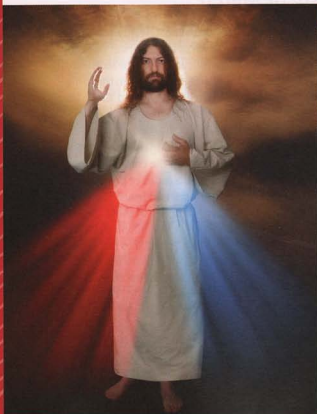
- Talk with family and friends about what that mercy might look like. How might it make a difference in people's lives?
- How might you be an 'apostle' of mercy?

JUDGE AND DECIDE

- How have your ideas about true happiness changed as you worked through this chapter?
- What changes would you suggest in our society to bring about the fullness of the values of the Beatitudes?
- What can you do right now to begin living a life of beatitude?

LEARN BY HEART

Working in pairs, help each other to memorize the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3–12.



DIVINE MERCY IMAGE BASED ON ONE OF SR. FAUSTINA'S VISIONS