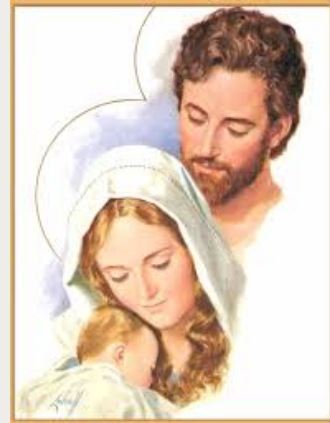


THE HOLY FAMILY, MODEL OF THE BEATITUDES

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INTRODUCTION

The Beatitudes were given to us by Jesus and teach us how to follow Him. I will first discuss how the Beatitudes are a calling to love, and then how Our Lady and St. Joseph lived them out. Our Blessed Mother, the one who knew Christ the most, was immaculate from the first moment of her conception, free from all stain of sin. Thus, she is the perfect follower of Christ, and is our most perfect model of the Beatitudes by the way she lived her life. Second only to Mary, Saint Joseph is the person that spent the most earthly hours and days with Jesus, and so we also will briefly discuss how St. Joseph lived the Beatitudes.



The Beatitudes, like all the teachings taught by Christ, are essentially teaching us how to love. Authentic love is willing to sacrifice itself for the best interest of the other. True love calls for death to self, in large or small ways. For example, St. Maximilian Kolbe was a Catholic priest who offered His very own life in exchange for another prisoner in a concentration camp during World War II. He exhorted his friars right before being taken to the camp, saying: 'do not forget love!'

The Beatitudes teach us how to love, which calls us to *focus less on ourselves, and more on the needs of others*. Let us look at each one, and see how the holy family models for us how to love by the way each of them lived out the Beatitudes in their lives.

1. POOR IN SPIRIT

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3)*

Those who are poor we think of as lacking in something, usually material possessions. Those who are poor in spirit have primarily a detachment from the goods of the earth. They have nothing of their own, but instead recognize their total dependence upon God. God is the first priority in their lives, and they are obedient to His Will.

Our Lord was poor in spirit, as well as materially poor, He who 'had no place to lay His head' (Lk 9:58), during His time here on earth. As an infant, Christ was born in a stable in Bethlehem, because there was no room for the holy family in the inn. Later, at the beginning of His public ministry, He rebuked the devil's temptation to rebel against God so as to have all the kingdoms of the world. Jesus only desired to do the will of God, His Father, and this was manifested in obedience: "I came down from Heaven not to do my own will, but the will of the one who sent me" (Jn 6:38).

Our Lady was poor in spirit. We see this in Our Lady's beautiful Magnificat:

*"My soul magnifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
The Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty" (Lk 1:46-49, 53).*

Our Lady said: 'My soul magnifies the Lord.' And what does a magnifying glass do? It makes something bigger. Her soul was like that with God. When she said, 'for He that is mighty hath done great things for me,' she recognizes her complete reliance on God. She went on that 'He has filled the hungry with good things,' meaning those who acknowledge they have a need are able to have it filled by God.

Our Lady was also obedient. She never said no to God. Her attitude towards God was the same as her response to the angel at the annunciation: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to thy Word" (Lk 1:38). Also, at the wedding feast of Cana, when the wine ran short, she told the

servers, and also tells us: "do whatever {Jesus} tells you" (Jn 2:5). That is what made Mary a true follower of Christ: her willingness to do the will of God.

We also find the model of obedience in St. Joseph, the man known for having faithfully carried out God's commands. Scripture tells us that when he dreamed that the angel told him to "get up, take the child and flee to Egypt..." (Mt 2:13), his response was immediate. Blessed John Paul II writes that St. Joseph showed a readiness of will like Mary's with regard to what the angel asked of him. He did not hesitate; but immediately fulfilled what the angel had commanded him (*Redemptoris Custos*, 3). The holy family fled to Egypt, with St. Joseph as the protector of the life of the mother and child.

In a private revelation of Our Lady to St. Bridget of Sweden in the 1300's, she told her regarding her spouse St. Joseph: "He was perfectly conformed to the Divine Will and so resigned to the dispositions of Heaven that he ever repeated: 'May the Will of God ever be done in me!' ... Wherefore, he now enjoys great glory in Heaven" (*The Virtues of St. Joseph*). St. Joseph, who was poor in spirit, is now enjoying the promise of the beatitude: 'The kingdom of heaven shall be theirs" (Mt 5:3).

2. THOSE WHO MOURN

*"Blessed are those who mourn
for they will be comforted" (Mt 5:4)*

It is interesting to think: When do we see Jesus mourning in the Gospel? What are the things that make Jesus and Mary weep? In the Gospels, Jesus foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and wept over it. The prophet Isaiah tells us: "He came to what was his own, but His own people did not accept him" (Jn 1:11). He also wept at the death of His friend Lazarus, and was perturbed, perhaps by the presence of death (Jn 11). Ultimately, Jesus is mourning over evil - and its consequences - which bring only death.

The mourning that the Beatitudes are speaking of is not for selfish reasons. It's not just mourning over something that bothers or affects me somehow - for instance, this person did not pay enough attention to me today, or he or she did not look at me right, etc... but really it's a mourning over the evil that happens, with a desire for the offender to come to repentance. It is mourning out of love for others. May we also mourn at what saddens Our Lord and Our Lady.... a mourning over sin - both our own and others.

Let us look more closely at what saddened Our Lady while she was on earth. She mourned over anything that pertained to wounding her Son, who is God-made-man. All sin, which comes from a word in Greek meaning "to miss the mark," is an offense against God, who 'is Love.'

Simeon had prophesied to Mary when Jesus was presented in the temple, "that you yourself a sword shall pierce..." (Lk 2:35). This prophecy was fulfilled during Jesus' passion: "one of the soldiers, pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out" (Jn 19:34). Jesus allowed His heart to be pierced for love of us, and died for the sins of mankind, taking them upon Himself. At this time, Our Lady was also mystically pierced in heart, so united was she to her Son.

We see in the Gospels how in St. Joseph's life he also was saddened over the lack of acceptance of the Son of God. For example, we see how, at the angel's bidding, he led the Holy family to Egypt when Herod was seeking Jesus's life. We know from Scripture that he shared in the first three sorrows of Our Lady: the prophecy of Simeon in the temple; the flight into Egypt; and the loss of the child Jesus in the temple. As a family, they shared together these sorrows. After the childhood of Jesus the Scriptures are silent in regards to St. Joseph. Tradition says he died early.

In modern day, Our Lady has appeared in many apparitions to call us, her children, to prayer and deeper conversion to God. In some apparitions of Our Lady, she was seen crying. Our Lady cries for us who allow ourselves to turn away from God.

For example, in the message of Akita, Japan, which began in 1973, a nun, Sr. Agnes, heard a voice coming from the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The statue also began to weep and did so three times that day. Her statue wept at intervals from 1975 until 1981. On October 13, 1973, Our Lady said, "*The thought of the loss of so many souls is the cause of my sadness... If sins increase in number and gravity, there will no longer be pardons for them... if men do not repent and better themselves, the Father will inflict a terrible punishment on all humanity*" (*The Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Akita*).

What makes Our Lady mourn should affect us, and should be what makes us mourn: a lack of love in our society. She continued: "The Church will be full of those who accept compromises and the demon will press many priests and consecrated souls to leave the service of the Lord..." (*ibid*). In her message at Akita, Our Lady asked that we pray very much for the Pope, bishops, and priests, as well as reciting often the prayer of the Holy Rosary.

In the apparition of Our Lady Mystical Rose, Our Lady appeared with three swords in her heart. She was especially mourning in this apparition over the infidelity of religious and consecrated souls. She appeared later with three roses, in place of the three swords. The roses were yellow, white, and red, and represented prayer, penance, and sacrifice, which helps repair and console the Heart of Our Blessed Mother for sin and infidelities of God's children.

In the apparition of LaSalette, Our Lady was seen with her head in her hands crying, because of the sins of Blasphemy and taking God's name in vain, and not honoring Sundays as days set aside for the Lord to rest and to attend Holy Mass. She asked the children to pray, to sacrifice and to propagate the messages.

When Jesus saw His mother from the cross, her love deeply consoled His heart. Like Our Lady, we can console the heart of Jesus by our love. The children of Fatima also wanted to console the Heart of Our Lord, who as Our Lady told them, is much offended by mankind's crimes. By consoling Him, we console also His mother. By our prayers and offerings, let us help dry the tears of Our Lady, which our precious. Let us console her Heart by loving God...by loving God with all that we are.

3. THE MEEK

*"Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land" (Mt 5:5).*

Jesus was meek of heart. Scripture says that He tells us: "Come to Me, all who labor and find life burdensome ... for I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11:28-29). Philippians tells us that Jesus "...humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death" (Phil 2:8). We also see him coming into Jerusalem before His passion, meek and riding on an ass (Mt 25).

The Beatitudes tell us that the meek will inherit the land, meaning the Kingdom of Heaven. Our Lady was both meek and humble of heart, like her Son Jesus. In the Magnificat, she proclaimed:

*"...for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed...
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly" (Lk 1: 48, 51-52).*

Meekness, or humility, is simply recognizing who we are before God. When Our Lady said God has looked with favor on His lowly servant, she acknowledged who she is: simply a servant of the Lord. Our Lady said in her magnificat, "For He that is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name" (Lk 1:49). In other words, Our Lady knows all the good that she has is a pure gift of God, from His hands. She said, 'He has lifted up the lowly...' also emphasizing that those "...He humbles, He also exalts..." (1 Sam 2:7), and as scripture says: "humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall raise you up" (James 4:10).

St. Joseph was humble. He served his son Jesus and wife Mary by hidden yet generous service to their needs, working hard daily. Blessed John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation, *Redemptoris Custos*, tells us: "St. Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies...he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need of great things-it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic" (24).

4. THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:6-7).*

To hunger and thirst for righteousness means to hunger and thirst for what is good and noble in the sight of

all. It means to always desire the good. It is to desire that the Kingdom of God may come "on earth, as it in Heaven" (Mt 6:10), as Jesus taught us to pray in the Our Father.

Our Lady must have also prayed the Our Father while on earth, and she very much desires God's righteousness and Kingdom to be established here on earth. In various apparitions of our heavenly mother her heart is always calling her children to more prayer. To grow in virtue and holiness we should utilize our spiritual weapons: prayer, fasting, reading the Bible, confession, and the praying the Holy Rosary.

Scriptures also tell us that St. Joseph was righteous man. After Mary's marriage to Joseph, but before they lived together, Scripture tells us that Mary had conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. However, St. Joseph did not know this, and before it was revealed to him in a dream about Jesus' identity, Scriptures tell us that "her husband Joseph, since *he was a righteous man*, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly" (Mt 1:19). Since he was righteous he followed the law, which called for separation, yet would not do anything further that might harm Mary. After finding out the truth of Jesus' identity as Son of God, St. Joseph assumed his role as foster father to Jesus, and guardian and protector of the holy family. Our Lady told St. Bridget in a private revelation: "{St. Joseph} was strong and constant against my enemies; he was the faithful witness of the wonders of Heaven..." (*The Virtues of St. Joseph*).

5. THE MERCIFUL

*"Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy." Mt 5:7.*

We are called to be merciful - and to show this mercy by forgiveness. In His public ministry, Jesus tells the parable of the unforgiving servant, to help teach us to be merciful. He says that a servant owed his master a large amount of money, but was unable to pay. "Moved with compassion, the master of that servant let him go" (Mt 18:27). That same servant found one of his servants who owed him a much smaller amount, yet began to choke him, and refused forgiveness. When his master got word of this report, he asked: "should you not have had pity on your fellow servant?" (Mt 18:33). He then put him in prison until he paid off the entire loan. Jesus tells us that His Heavenly Father will do the same to us, unless we forgive each other from our hearts.

We see Jesus practicing forgiveness all throughout His ministry, and from the cross. After the Resurrection, Jesus forgave Peter, allowing him a triple affirmation of His love after his triple denial of Him before His death. The letter of James tells us that "the Lord is compassionate and merciful..." (5:11). In the 1930's, Jesus revealed to St. Faustina the depths of the mercy of His heart. He exhorted her, "tell the whole world about my mercy" (*Divine Mercy in My Soul*, 975). In one of His appearances to her, He told her that "the souls who propagate My mercy I shield through their entire lives ... and at the hour of death I will not be a Judge for them, but the Merciful Savior" (ibid, 1075).

Our Lady knows the mercy of the Lord, that His mercy reaches all those who fear Him, from one generation to the next. She herself has deeply received the Lord's mercy, preserving her from all stain of sin. In her Magnificat she declared:

*"He has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever" (Lk 1:50, 54-55).*

If her Son is mercy incarnate, so is the Blessed Mother merciful. She is the dispenser of all of God's graces, but in a special way, the particular grace of His Mercy. We can be sure that Our Lady also forgave St. Peter. We see her together with St. Peter and the other apostles waiting for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit after His Resurrection.

It says of Jesus in John, that "He loved his own in the world, and he loved them until the end..." (13:1). So also does Jesus' mother love us to the very end. Mary also forgave at the foot of the cross, just like her Son, because of the love she bears for us. We even ask her in the Hail Mary prayer, to 'pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.' She is interceding for her Son's mercy even at the very end of our lives.

St. Joseph was also merciful. At first he did not understand Mary's motherhood, yet in his mercy and love for Mary, did not want to expose her to shame or have her stoned, for a penalty under the law. His merciful heart did not want to see this happen to her, but wanted to protect her life.

St. Joseph also intercedes for God's mercy for us at the end of our lives, as he is the patron of a holy death. This is because, as tradition holds, he died a holy death, with both Jesus and Mary by his side.

6. THE PURE OF HEART

*"Blessed are the pure of heart,
for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8).*

Jesus, being without sin, was pure in heart in a very special way. He taught us that what enters from the outside, such as certain foods, does not make a person unclean, but "what comes out of a person, that is what defiles. From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly" (Mk 7:20-22). Those are what defile, while the pure in heart are able to see God.

After Her Son, Our Lady was the most pure in heart, in that she was conceived without original sin. The Church teach that by a special grace, God preserved her from the stain of original sin from the first moment of her conception, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ. Our Mother Mary welcomed Him most perfectly into her heart and life, especially at the annunciation. We also should have a clean home for Jesus to live in, ie a pure heart, because Jesus want to make His residence in our hearts. To have a clean heart we must get rid of all vices and sin, with God's help.

St. Joseph lived in his life in purity and simplicity. A pure heart is one that can perceive the things of God more clearly. In *Redemptoris Custos*, Blessed John Paul described him as a simple heart. He wrote that St. Joseph had the logic and strength that belong to simple and clear souls, giving him the power to make great decisions.

St. Bridget wrote that Our Lady said of St. Joseph: "...being dead to the flesh and the world, living only for God and for Heavenly goods, which were the only things he desired" (*The Virtues of St. Joseph*). In the Liturgy, Mary is celebrated as 'united to Joseph, the just man, by a bond of marital and virginal love.' He lived only for love, and for the good of the Blessed Mother and Jesus, who were in His care.

7. THE PEACEMAKERS

*"Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will called children of God" (Mt 5:9).*

Jesus told us, "Peace I leave with you" (Jn 14:27). Isaiah prophesied that the messiah would be the "prince of peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Peace comes as a fruit of doing God's will and choosing love. The peacemakers will be called God's children.

The apparition of Our Lady in Fatima in 1917 was a call to pray for world peace and the end of the war. Our Lady asked the children to pray for the conversion of humanity, and for peace.

St. Joseph in his lifetime made choices of peace. As stated, before the truth of Jesus' identity was revealed to him, because of the love he bore Mary, scriptures say he chose not to have her 'exposed to shame.' Thus, as well as having a merciful heart, he was also a peacemaker.

8. THE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUS SAKE

*"Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:10).*

Jesus was persecuted during His life on earth, which ultimately led to His death on the cross. He warns us: "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you" (Jn 15:20). We have a great promise attached when we suffer in this way: the Kingdom of heaven is ours.

Our Lady was at the foot of the Cross, united with Jesus. The persecutions He endured, she also endured

spiritually. Each of them chose to allow love to triumph, even if that meant the sufferings of the cross.

The holy family experienced persecution, especially in the childhood of Jesus. Once more, we see in scripture how St. Joseph and Our Lady had to flee to Egypt, because Jesus' life was sought by His enemies.

IN SUMMARY

In summary, each of the Beatitudes teach us a different facet of love. Those who are poor in spirit are generous, and do not keep material wealth just for themselves, but share it with others. Spiritually they have a primary dependence on God, loving the things of God. Those who mourn are not focused on themselves, but on others, and like Jesus, what primarily disturbs them is the presence of evil, and thus they desire to eradicate it. The meek also think of others before themselves - by rejecting arrogance, and expressing love through humble service. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness can be described as desiring God's Kingdom to come. They are seeking righteousness in justice, and what is good for others. If one is merciful, this entails being forgiving, and letting go of grudges and complaints about others. The pure in heart are trying to live a life of virtue, so that they may see and act how God does. Those cultivating peace are walking in joy and love, as God's children. The persecuted are patient in adversity; always standing for what is right and just no matter the difficulty. The reward promised is the kingdom of God.

To conclude, the Beatitudes are teachings of Jesus which exhort us to deeper charity. The apostle Paul tells us, "Above all these, put on love" (Col 3:14). May we live the way of Christ, His Blessed Mother, and St. Joseph, and may the Beatitudes teach us in all things to choose love.

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