

# **THE BEATITUDES**

## ***The Touchstone of Christianity.***

### **10 SESSIONS ON THE BEATITUDES** **FOR DISCUSSION, PRAYER AND STUDY.**

**Note:**

*Edited from some cyclostyled notes without the author's name. Our apology to the author for not being able to give credit*

#### **Recommend Books for Complementary Reading.**

*(Bibliography supplied by the author of the notes)*

Jerome Biblical Commentary. (The Beatitudes)

New Catholic Commentary. -- do --

Peake's commentary on the Bible -- do --

Interpreter's Bible. -- do --

William Barclay's: The Plain Man Looks at the Beatitudes.

C. F. Andrews. The Sermon on the Mount. (London 1949), 3<sup>rd</sup> A.D. Linsay. The Moral Teaching of Jesus. In examination of the Sermon on the Mount. (New York. 1937).

Eduard Thurneysen. The Sermon on the Mount (Trans. USA 1964)

#### **Practical Hints.**

- At the end of each session, lead the participants through a reflective self-examination on how they stand in the spirit and practice of the beatitude considered
- Close down each session with a period of prayer, ideally a personal shared prayer.

#### **Uses of these Exercises**

- ✓ Catechism classes
- ✓ Bible study classes
- ✓ Gospel discussion groups
- ✓ Recollections
- ✓ Prayer Sessions
- ✓ Christian values examination meets

## **THE 10 SESSIONS**

### **Session: 1.**      ***An introduction in the beatitudes.***

#### **Points for discussion:**

- In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus confronts us with an unattainable ideal of morality, which we have to strain to achieve. Can you see in this as an healthy or as an unhealthy tension for a human life?

- In the Light of this, find out areas of healthy and unhealthy tensions and ways to fight them
- What do actually cause frustration: unattainable or attainable ideals?
- Jesus asks us not to observe precepts but to follow Him. Can you foresee and measure the difference THAT this can make in a person's life?
- Jesus gives us personalized doctrine. How does this make him a unique teacher and which are the benefits we derive from it?
- Is growth in the following of Jesus a quantitative or a qualitative entity? Discuss.

## **Session : 2**

## **First Beatitude:**

### **The Poor in Spirit – The Consciously Needy.**

#### **Points for discussion**

1. The Israelites equated poverty with piety. Is this in keeping with the spirit of the Gospel
2. Can a rich man qualify for God's Kingdom?
3. The first paradox in the Beatitudes is that we must fight poverty tooth and nail and yet embrace it voluntarily. Does our human nature make it possible?
4. What does poverty in spirit add to material poverty?
5. Does Jesus give us a sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God on earth from the way the poor are treated?
6. Is this sign present in the Church today?
7. Find passages in the New Testament in which Jesus' personalizes the first beatitude?

## **Session 3.**

## **Second Beatitude:**

### **Those who Mourn. The Voluntarily Exposed to the World's Suffering.**

#### **Points for Discussion**

1. How does the moral quality of the poor in spirit compare with that of those who mourn?
2. Does mourning destroy pain and suffering and create happiness? In what way?
3. Is there any other way to destroy or lessen suffering? Which? How
4. Does daily repentance serve any purpose in life? How is this connected with the first beatitude?
5. Do you find in society, and even in the church practices that are painful and intolerable? Which?
6. What is the role assigned to hope in our fight against suffering?
7. Does comfort exist in spite of sorrow or because of it? Comment.

## S ession 4.

### *Third Beatitude:*

#### Blessed are The Meek –The non -aggressive Under provocation.

##### Points for Discussion.

1. Meekness looks soft and unappealing to many, could it be because we get only the caricature of meekness and not its true picture? Explain.
2. What is the difference between meekness and submissiveness
3. Assertion, namely, true un-aggressiveness, and non-submissiveness, is the hallmark of the meek.
4. What does assertion true meekness, do to us and to others?
5. What are the limits of non-aggressiveness?
6. Does self-knowledge help one to be meek? How?
7. Is the ideal of becoming un-provocable praise-worthy? If so, how?
8. Does meekness implies strength or weakness? Why
9. The meek are promised the land. What does the land stand for?

## Session : 5      *Fourth Beatitude:*

#### The Hungry for Justice – Be passionately Righteous.

##### **Points for Discussion:**

1. This is called the first of the positive beatitudes. Can you show this by comparing it to the previous three? How do they complement each other?
2. Jesus demands a higher righteousness than that of the religious leaders of his time (Mt.5,20). What is the difference between the two? Any modern equivalence of these two types of righteousness?
3. What sort of hunger Jesus speaks of in this beatitude. What means can you suggest to foster this hunger?
4. There are hungers whose satisfaction ends in nausea, others in joy and fulfillment. Explain t this sentence.

## Sesion: 6      *Fifth Beatitude:*

#### The Merciful and Compassionate

##### **Points for Discussion.**

1. What does Jesus mean by being merciful?
2. Is there any difference between “”mercy and compassion””?
3. What are the fruits of being compassionate in feeling, in speech and in action
4. What’s the attitude required to be compassionate?
5. How can we grow in mercy? Suggest means and ways.
6. What we mean by sympathy and empathy? ’

7. God is said to be rich in mercy (Ex 34, 6). Does this mean that God excels more
8. in mercy than in other of his qualities, say justice, wisdom, etc.?
9. In order to establish peace and harmony at all levels - international, national, at home, within our hearts - what's better: justice or mercy? Discuss.

## **Session: 7**

## **Sixth Beatitude:**

### **The Pure of Heart – The no further motives in mind.**

#### **Points for Discussion**

1. What attracts you most in this beatitude?
2. What does Jesus mean by “pure of heart”?
3. Has honesty and truthfulness anything to do with purity of heart? What?
4. Has purity of heart anything to do with “chastity”?
5. What means would you recommend for its practice?
6. Can you discuss this in the light of any person whom you consider outstanding in purity of heart?
7. How does purity of heart lead to clarity of mind?
8. What realities does a ‘pure-of-heart-man’ see? Does his vision make any difference in his life?
9. Can you enumerate some of the main issues on which men are usually confused nowadays?
10. How does purity of heart help to clear up such confusions?

## **Session : 8**

## **Seventh Beatitude :**

### **The Peace Makers – The Fighting for peace**

#### **Points for Discussion**

1. Peace means complete and permanent inward composure. Discuss the meaning of this and find out the best means to foster it.
2. Discuss peacemaking in its negative aspect of absence of war and in its positive aspect of social well-being.
3. What ways have helped you in the past to maintain peace in this double aspect?
4. What role does meekness (3<sup>rd</sup> Btd) play in making peace? Is Justice enough to create peace? At the individual, collective level?
5. Why is the Eucharist called the Sacrament of unity? How is unity related to peace?

## **Session : 9**

## **Eight Beatitude:**

### **The Unjustly Persecuted – The Innocent Sufferers.**

#### **Points on Discussion**

1. Can there be joy in suffering? If there is, is it found in all types of suffering or only in some? Which?
2. How can we discover and experience this kind of joy?

3. Does the beatitude imply that a genuinely good person cannot be good if not persecuted?
4. Is it then right to say that persons who are not persecuted are not good?
5. What type of persecution is meant here? Discuss.
6. Is it true that the Christian character when it is not welcome stings by its very beauty and it burdens by its very holiness?
7. Jesus recommends greater joy in persecution than out of it (5, 11-12). What reason is there for this?

## **Session : 10**

## **Conclusion:**

### **The Two Tiny Parables of Salt and Light. Mt 5, 13-16**

#### **Points for Discussion**

1. The image of the salt means first that the follower of Jesus must be different from the people whom he is supposed to influence. In which ways should he be different?
2. Do Christian Institutions fulfill their purpose by having social influence or should they have moral influence only ?
3. What kind of influence do our present Christian Institutions have?
4. The salt gives savor to the food by being inserted into it.
5. What is the right type of insertion into the world required by the followers of Jesus?
6. Discuss in this connection the meaning of involvement with its two extremes of un-involvement and over-involvement?
7. Tolstoy demanded that Christians they should destroy in themselves the fear of poverty, illness and death to make themselves credible. Is this a justified demand?
8. In Mt. 6,1 Jesus asks his followers to hide from others the good that they do. Here in 5, 16 he asks them to show to others the good that they do. How can both go together?