

THE EIGHT BEATITUDES AND THE SEVEN VIRTUES  
MOST CLOSELY RELATED TO THEM  
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I can think of no better way of growing spiritually as followers of Jesus Christ found in Matthew 5:1-12. I like to look at the beatitudes as “be-attitudes” or attitudes of being. This distinguishes them from existential actions listed in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17).

We can obey the Ten Commandments and miss the spirit of the law in which they were written – a spirit of love. The Ten Commandments give us concrete ways in which we can live the Great Commandment of love – the dual command to love God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39; Dt. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). But in no way are the Ten Commandments exhaustive. They give us the bare minimum that we need to do in order to be faithful to God and in good relationship with our neighbors. However, if we wish to be models of Christian discipleship or leaders within the Church of Christ, we must do far more than this bare minimum. We must be living by the spirit of the law, which is fully expressed in the one commandment that Jesus gave us: “Love one another as I love you.” (John 15:12)

We can be sure that we love as Jesus loves us when we follow the example that he gave us in the Gospels. If we have the attitudes of being presented in the beatitudes, we will be able to learn to love as Jesus loves. These right attitudes will result in right actions that far exceed the minimum required by the Ten Commandments. On the other hand, sin will follow from having wrong attitudes.

The first attitude of being expressed in Mt. 5:1-12 is this: being poor in spirit. “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.” (Mt. 5:3) The poor in spirit are those who acknowledge their total dependence upon God, in other words, those who recognize their spiritual helplessness. The Hebrew word for the poor that is used in Mt. 5:3 meant someone physically poor. In Semite society, the society to whom Jesus speaks here, the poor were those without prestige, those whom were oppressed. They were “nobodies,” thus totally in need. They were so insecure and empty that it was easy for them to turn to God to be filled with grace.

The rich and the powerful, on the other hand, were so secure and filled with their own importance that they found no need to turn to God. But, in reality, even those who are physically and financially secure have need for God, for our most immense emptiness as human beings is our emptiness of the divine. Only God can fill that void. If another reality has replaced God as the primary desire of our hearts (for example, possessions, pleasure or power), we must rid ourselves of our attachment to that reality or we cannot become as dependent on God as was Jesus, who had no place to lay his head (Mt. 8:20; Lk. 9:58). He freed himself from human ambition and attachments to follow the will of the Father for him. He even detached himself from the enjoyment of heaven to come to earth

in order to save us (Phil. 2:6-7). When people tried to make him into an earthly king, he fled (Jn. 6:15). Finally, he accepted death on a cross (Phil. 2:8). But, because of his cooperation with the Father, he was raised up to be at his right hand in heaven. His resurrection is his promise of eternal life for us who place faith in him. The renunciations of Jesus leading to his resurrection call us also to that poverty which makes us rich. Segundo Galilea writes in his book *The Beatitudes: To Evangelize as Jesus Did*: “The renunciations of poverty are possible only because the person who embraces poverty is filled with the values of the kingdom and has placed his or her confidence in God and his promises....What makes poverty Christian is not the renunciation, but the motives of the renunciation: confidence in the God of Jesus and in the reality of his kingdom, in whose riches one already participates.” (pages 35-36)

The illusion that the world gives us, with its materialism, is that we can do without God – that what we have in this world is as good as it gets. How can a person with such an attitude ever get to God or to heaven? It is impossible. Only those who recognize that they are spiritually helpless – totally in need of God at all times – have the right attitude to enter the Kingdom of heaven. To live according to this attitude of being means being a person of humility and faith.

A good model of these virtues is St. Therese of Lisieux. Many times, in her *Story of a Soul*, she confesses that she can do nothing on her own and abandons herself totally to God in utter helplessness. One is never too old to imitate her way of “spiritual childhood,” for indeed we cannot enter heaven unless we become like little children (Mt. 18:3) in our total dependence on our divine Daddy.

For those who will not read St. Therese because they consider her to be a weakling, I suggest that, unless we acknowledge our weakness before the tremendous power of God as she did, we can never have the power in Christian ministry that God intends us to have. As Kurt Reinhardt asserted, “The weaker a person is, the stronger God is in him.” If the truth be known, St. Therese probably has had more influence on Catholics than any other saint except the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her *Story of a Soul* is probably read more by Catholics than any book other than the Bible. She is a true spiritual heavyweight because she made herself weak before God. She was truly happy because she was surrendered to God. So, if we are to be truly happy, in this world as well as the next, we need to have the same kind of self-surrender, not only to God but also to the people we serve, because God’s will is revealed to us through them. Considering ourselves superior to others will stand in the way of our joy. Being content with our behavior, because it seems to be better than that of others we know, results in the kind of self-righteousness that Jesus condemned in the scribes and Pharisees. That attitude is a sickness that will be detrimental for religious leaders of today as well. But it is avoided when we have consistently good practices of prayer, celebration of the Sacraments, and reflection on Scripture.

St. Paul’s teaching that we should “pray constantly” (I Thes. 5:17) means that we, at every moment of our lives, are having an attitude of total dependence on God. We are realizing that all the good things that we are experiencing in our

lives are gifts from our Creator. We are developing an absolute attitude of gratitude that has no room for pride. We are not only grateful to God, but also to our neighbors. We wish to cooperate with them in building a God-dependent society, in other words, creating a heaven on earth. What none of us can do alone, we can do together, with the help of God. If we seek to live individualistically, we will continuously be frustrated by our own powerlessness. But when we cooperate with God and one another, respecting one another's rights, we have the resources and talents to build a better world.

Our best helper in building a God-dependent human community is the Holy Spirit. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the early Church when it was still very fearful following his death and resurrection. When they received the gifts of the Spirit, they had the courage to proclaim the Gospel in such a way that many were quickly brought to faith in Christ and were baptized (Acts 2:41). Besides common gifts, the community of believers also received individual gifts which were to be used for the common good. Some are mentioned in I Cor. 12:8-10: expressions of wisdom, expressions of knowledge, expressions of faith, healing, mighty deeds, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Some of these charisms are possessed by only a few and can become the claim of imposters. But when they are authentic, the Christian community should highly value and honor them.

On the other hand, we all have unique (although ordinary) gifts that can be used for the benefit of all people. Whatever the gifts, the Christian community should not discourage them, but even call people to take positions they do not want in order for them to grow and to build up the whole Church. We should use our talents generously, whatever our role is in society.

For people to use their talents for the glory of God and the good of all others requires both generosity and humility. Proud people instead strive for their own glorification and benefit. Humility is the virtue which we should most associate with both the first and third beatitudes. For that reason, my title speaks of the eight beatitudes and only seven virtues. In other words, every beatitude has a virtue most closely related to it, but the first and third beatitudes have the same primary virtue in common. The Hebrew word for "humble" is the origin for the words for "poor" and "meek."

The third beatitude is: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land." Our first reaction to this beatitude may be unbelief, because we know that our world does not reward the meek or humble of heart. It seems that those who get the most land are those who are not meek or gentle, but those who use their cunning to take advantage of those who lack sufficient legal knowledge or do not have connections with people in power to hold onto their property.

Of course, the land that Jesus is referring to in the third beatitude is the Promised Land of heaven. On earth those who exalt themselves may obtain much land. But Jesus teaches us that, at the final judgment, those who exalt themselves will be humbled. "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Lk. 14:11) This was not only Jesus' teaching, but also his experience. Jesus was exalted by the Father for humbling himself to become one like us and to suffer and die for us so that we

could rise above the status to which we, in our pride and disobedience, had reduced ourselves.

Pride will cause us to use those whom we consider to be weak to our own advantage. But meekness or gentleness results in our being patient with the weaknesses of others and working for their benefit. Jesus calls us to treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated in our times of weakness. Meekness tolerates weakness. It leads us to control our anger and to forgive the apparent injuries that others do to us.

Not only Jesus, but also Saints Paul and Peter teach patience and forgiveness to us. St. Paul writes in Col. 3:12-13: "Put on..., as God's chosen one, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do." St. Peter states in I Peter 3:8-9: "Be of one mind, sympathetic, loving towards one another, compassionate, humble. Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing."

Those who call down blessings, rather than curses, upon those who are unjust to them will inherit blessings. This does not mean that we should allow others to treat us unjustly. We should strive for the righting of wrongs.

Jesus and saints who have manifested meekness were not completely void of anger. After all Jesus used abusive words with the scribes and Pharisees and used a whip to drive the money-changers and unscrupulous sellers out of the Temple. But all of this was done with the hope that at least some of them would repent of their pride and dishonesty, as Nicodemus and Zacchaeus did. Louis A. Rongione, O.S.A. speaks very profoundly when he writes in his *Conferences on the Beatitudes*:

Meekness does not demand that we must not manifest indignation at what is wrong. All it means is that our wrath and displeasure must always be controlled by the virtues of temperance, fortitude, and charity. The righteous indignation of the saint is quite different from the outbursts of temper of the person who irritated because his own plans have been thwarted. The former is temperate and impersonal; the latter, excessive and wholly personal. The one is a virtue; the other, a vice. (page 50)

Jesus and other holy people in history call us to be angry but not sin. We are not to carry grudges or look for opportunities to get even with others that have offended us. As Samuel Johnson has said, "It is better to suffer a wrong than to do it." We are not meek if we are getting angry and seeking revenge for every little offense.

Jesus did not take revenge against those who condemned and executed him, but prayed from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Lk. 23:34) The Blessed Virgin Mary seemed to have the same

attitude toward the disciples of Jesus that deserted him at the time of his arrest and crucifixion. She is with them at Pentecost to pray with them for the sending of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, regarding the third beatitude, meek and humble people will not be unduly disturbed by their own sinfulness, as though they were perfect while the rest of humanity is not. According to Louis A. Rongione, those who lack humility and meekness think in this manner when failing grievously: “What a fool I have made of myself! To think that *I* could stoop to such a thing! I could see how other people would be so sinful and senseless, but as for *me*...well , I thought better of myself!” (page 49)

I will now proceed to the fifth beatitude, in which the chief virtue is mercifulness, because it is closely aligned with the third one. Jesus taught, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” The mercifulness of Jesus and Mary are more than a good example to us. Coupled with Jesus injunction that “if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you your transgressions,” (Mt. 6:15) their mercy shows us that true holiness requires that we forgive others. We block the forgiveness bestowed upon us by the Father through his Son when we withhold mercy from anyone.

We are not excused from forgiving another just because someone persists in sinning against us. St. Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” (Mt. 18:21) He thought he was being generous in giving the number seven. Jewish rabbis were teaching that you could stop forgiving after someone offended you three times. Peter doubled that number and added one to make the Jewish number for perfection – seven. But Jesus answers Peter, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.” (Some translations read “seventy times seven times.”) Regardless of the translation, in the Jewish mentality any repetition of the number seven indicates infinity. Infinite forgiveness includes both past, present and possible future sins. So Jesus calls us to forgive the sins of the dead that we may not have forgiven. If we do not, we will not be forgiven. Also we will not have God’s mercy if we do not forgive the present sins of people, even those who refuse to ask our forgiveness or who refuse to forgive us for our sins. Also we need to forgive our own sins – past, present, and future – or God will not forgive us. The merciful Father would never be as hard on us as we are upon ourselves, unless we block his mercy by holding onto our guilt and shame. Ultimately, we are called to forgive God for making us and others the way we are or allowing us to become the way we are.

True forgiveness gives up resentment or holding something against someone, even if you cannot forget what was said or done. We should always forgive but not always forget. The remembering may be necessary so that we be on guard against persistent human weaknesses. Such recalling of the past is caution, not resentment. But making another’s sin known far and wide, ignoring the person, or taking revenge is the result of lack of forgiveness and hatred. As God does not separate himself from us when we sin, neither should we separate ourselves from others when they sin. As Jesus teaches, we are to “be merciful as the heavenly Father is merciful.”

If we have become hardened towards ourselves or others because of sin, we need to pray for the gift of forgiveness. Also we need to pray that others do not become hardened and encourage one another. As we are advised in the Letter to the Hebrews: “Encourage yourselves daily while it is still ‘today,’ so that none of you may grow hardened...” (Heb. 3:13) To this I add a bit of wisdom from the Old Testament that Jesus himself quoted: “Do not let the sun go down on your anger.”

I conclude this reflection on the fifth beatitude with a true story about a merciful parish in the United States.

A church in Indianapolis was burglarized twice. The intruder stole some canned goods and took a bath in the baptistry. After the second break-in, the thief left a note. “I’m desperate and hungry,” he wrote, “with nothing to eat and no place to sleep. Please forgive me...Joe.” The pastor left this message in return: “Dear Joe: We’re very much concerned and want to help you. No one is mad that you broke in. If you come again, please call us at the following number...: Joe came again and called the number. The congregation found him a part-time job and collected clothing for him. (Christopher News Notes; Jan.-Feb. 1977; New York)

The beauty of this story is not only in the forgiveness bestowed on Joe, but also in that the parishioners recognized that the man had been deprived of a dignified life and acted to change his situation for the better.

The story is a good transition to the fourth beatitude, because the congregation involved was doing something to combat the injustice in society. This beatitude reads: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice; they shall have their fill.” It has to do with giving God and all creatures the good that is due them. Justice demands that we respect others as God respects them. It requires that we take the interests of others to heart and work against the inequities that plague them. There are some injustices that we have to live with, but other inequalities are so extreme that we must do something to try to change the system that allows them. Some will do this through the exercise of their right to vote, but others may get involved more actively. Even if we are not in a position to change the system, we all can speak out against injustice when we see it and help alleviate the plight of those that has arisen because of the injustice in our society. Doing the work of justice can also be called hope-giving behavior.

Scripture call us in many ways to reach out to the victims of injustice, but it first of all urges us to be just in our personal behavior. In the Old Testament, for example, we can read: “This is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8) Here the prophet Micah does not say that God asks for fasting and penance. In fact, another prophet – Isaiah – criticizes the righteous hypocrisy of his fellow believers:

Look, you do business on your fastdays,  
you oppress all your workmen;  
look, you quarrel and squabble when you fast  
and strike the poor man with your fist....  
Is it not this the sort of fast that pleases me  
- it is the Lord Yahweh who speaks –  
to break unjust fetters  
and undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to share your bread with the hungry,  
and shelter the homeless poor,  
to clothe the man you see to be naked  
and not to turn from your own kin? (Isaiah 58:3-4, 6-7)

In the New Testament, St. James writes: “If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, “I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty”, without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead.” (James 2: 15-16)

By the time St. James wrote this, the Church had drifted far from the equality of life that existed in the post-Pentecost community. Of that equitable society, we read in the Acts of the Apostles: “None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from them, to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any members who might be in need.” (Acts 4: 34-35)

Marian Cowan, C.S.J. writes in her blistering essay “Hunger and Thirst for Justice Manifest Spiritual Health” (Human Development, Summer 1983):

The church started out as a community of persons who could be recognized by their love for one another and by their sharing of both their person and their material goods. All too soon it became a formalized church with rules and regulations, dos and don'ts of all dimensions. Over the centuries we have conquered, enslaved, grown rich, become inebriated with power, slain with the sword, burned at the stake, closed the gates of heaven against people and denied them access to the sacraments – and salved our consciences with prayers that often rose from our own self-righteousness. (page 20)

Hopefully what God is doing with the Church today is purifying us of our past arrogance and lack of charity, so that we truly are the holy people we would like to claim to be. Marian Cowan concludes her essay by saying that we cannot justifiably separate our spiritual life from the works of justice that it impels us to do. In fact, she asserts that our justice-building is a sign of our true spirituality:

The kind of satisfaction a Fourth Beatitude person experiences is not satiety, but the feeling of being right with oneself, true to one's deepest self....Our hunger and thirst are urging us to look for ways to bring an end to injustice, to seek out the causes of social sinfulness so that we can eradicate them. In doing so we will find our satisfaction in knowing that we are spending our energies as Jesus himself spent his, even unto death....Active hungering and thirsting for justice are among the clearest indications of union with God – the blessed state that Christian believers have always recognized and traditionally defined as *true holiness*. (page 23)

The goal of eradicating social injustice is a very high calling but a difficult one. Although we may have some remarkable successes in our efforts to fight for what is right, there will always be setbacks and disappointments. In the midst of gains, there are also losses.

This is a good starting-point for looking at the second beatitude (in some translations named as the third beatitude) – “Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be consoled.” In justice work, there will always be grief over existing injustice and frustrations in one's fight for what is right. Jesus grieved not only over the death of his cousin Lazarus, but also over the unwillingness of the People of God to accept the Kingdom of God as he was introducing it. He mourned over the deadly spiritual condition of the Chosen People: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often I longed to gather your children as a hen gather her chicks under her wings, and you refused.” (Mt. 23:37)

What virtue is most needed in the face of difficult and frustrating situations? Our immediate answer might be courage or patience, but the most necessary virtue is that of prudence or being able to do the proper thing in a given situation. When Jesus was mourning over the injustice he found among his own people, he displayed prudence by not calling down fire to consume them but by having compassion for them. He did not pity himself for all his seemingly wasted efforts, but continued to trust his Father for ultimate victory. His hope for future joy allowed him to smile his way through present sorrows.

This has also been the prudent attitude of saints who suffered but did not wallow in self-pity. An example of this can be seen in the life of St. Therese of Lisieux. She described her prudent way of living in this way: “When I suffer a lot or have to go through difficult and painful things, instead of feeling sorry for myself, I smile. At first I did not succeed very well, but now I'm so happy that it has become a habit with me.” She was living the second beatitude: “Blessed are they who mourn; for they shall be comforted.” How is it possible for us to smile our way through hardships? The only way we can do it is through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter that overcomes our mourning and gives us confidence that things will improve.

St. Paul, who pleaded three times for the “thorn in his flesh” to be removed, received this message from the Lord: “My grace is enough for you; my



power is at its best in weakness.” (2 Cor. 12:9) Paul’s thorn may have been an emotional ailment rather than a physical one, because the Greek word “sarx”, which is usually translated as “flesh”, is more accurately translated as “self”. Maybe his thorn was his lack of eloquence in preaching, which had to be bolstered by “the convincing power of the Holy Spirit”. By patience with himself and prudence with others, he was able to win many for Christ. He had confidence in the future of the faith, even though he had opposed Christians in the past and had difficulties in spreading the Gospel in the present. In evangelization, it is fruitless to remain in a state of lamentation. We mourn our losses and limitations but we also call upon the Holy Spirit for comfort and then get on with our work while having confidence in God. St. Augustine gives good advice: “Leave the past to the mercy of God. Leave the present to the love of God. Leave the future to the divine providence of God.”

As we are comforted by the Holy Spirit and our gentle heavenly Father in our sorrows, we will be able to give comfort to others in their sorrows. Such is the teaching of St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a gentle Father and the God of all consolation, who comforts us in all our sorrows, so that we can offer others, in their sorrows, the consolation that we have received from God ourselves.” Indeed, as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so, through Christ, does our consolation overflow.

Then, in the process of easing others’ burdens, we ease our own. Whatever we measure out to others will be measured back to us. I conclude my presentation on the second beatitude with these encouraging words from St. Paul: “Work for the Lord with untiring effort and earnestness of spirit. If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come; and keep on praying. If any of the saints are in need you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care. Bless those who persecute you: never curse them, bless them. Rejoice with those who rejoice and be sad with those who sorrow....Resist evil and conquer it with good.” (Romans 12:11-15, 21)

St. Paul’s comment here about blessing those who persecute us leads us quite smoothly into the eighth beatitude: “Blessed are those who suffer persecution for justice’s sake; the kingdom of heaven is theirs.” How are those who are persecuted able to bless their persecutors? Because their focus is on a kingdom beyond this life. They can actually view their oppressors as being an aid for them to reach heaven. They have taken to heart the two verses following Jesus listing of the beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew: “Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.” (Mt. 5:11-12)

Therefore they do not curse their persecutors or seek to take revenge, but instead are able to pray for them, as Jesus instructed us: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly.” (Lk. 6:28)

One might assume that the main virtue of those who are persecuted is courage in the face of danger, but I suggest that it is rather perseverance in faith

no matter what they are experiencing. Martyrs do not ordinarily seek to be martyred. They do not cast themselves into dangerous situations. Rather, as they are living their faith perseveringly, they anger those who are opposed to their faith. For example, Christians, being forbidden to offer things for pagan worship, when required to offer incense to Caesar, refused. They did not seek to be martyred, but their constant fidelity revealed that they were Christians.

Today we may never risk martyrdom for adhering to our faith but there are occasions on which we, because of our strong Christian principles, could be abused by non-Christians or lax Christians for refusing to do what many others are doing. Whenever we endure hardship for standing up for what we believe in or for our religious practices, we are undergoing persecution. We should see this as an opportunity to follow Christ in bearing sufferings that we do not deserve. Jesus gave these conditions for being his disciple: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it." (Mt. 16:24-25)

For us, "losing our lives" may mean losing our honor or status in society for our fidelity to the Gospel. It may even mean losing our jobs for standing up for our Christian principles, for example, health-workers being dismissed for opposition to abortions being performed in the facility in which they work. In that case, it is a matter of people losing their livelihood for defending others' right to life. Sometimes being persecuted for justice' sake means not losing one's life but losing one's high standard of living in order to live in the way of Christ. If we are willing to take this risk, then we are living the eighth beatitude.

As we persevere in our faith in the midst of opposition, we become firmer in our convictions and are able to empathize with others who are oppressed in some way. We are able to engage in faith-building behavior. We become ones who can walk with others in their sorrows because we ourselves are walking the road to Calvary with Jesus. We can encourage them in their "little deaths", reminding them that, as they die with Christ, they will also live with him in eternity.

Being a source of encouragement is a way to bring peace to other people, therefore we have here a good transition to the seventh beatitude: "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called children of God." Of course, the virtue here is peacemaking, but we could also call it love-enhancing behavior.

Peacemaking has to do with working to establish right relations between people. It is sharing in Jesus' work of reconciliation. Of course, we cannot do this unless we are reconciled and at peace with others or at least not standing in the way of right relations. But being able to be a peacemaker first of all requires inner peace and personal reconciliation with God. These two always go together. Louis A. Rongioni writes: "Peace with ourselves...is secured when each of our personal faculties performs its proper function and none interferes with the other. The senses are subject to reason, reason to faith, and the whole person to God. Peace with ourselves, therefore, is tantamount to peace with God. It is called also peace of conscience and implies obedience to the will of God." (page 130)

Only if this condition exists within us and we have peace with others can we have hope of helping others to be reconciled. Qualities of wisdom, relational

skill, tact, self-control, discretion, foresight, and discernment are also highly important for a peacemaker. With these gifts, the peacemaker, according to Segundo Galilea in his book *The Beatitudes: To Evangelize as Jesus Did*, must seek to bring about these effects in those who are alienated from one another: the reestablishment of justice and the forgiveness of one another's offenses. (pages 78-79) If these do not happen, peace is not possible. Any "peace treaty" will not be kept.

As a guide for peacemaking, we need only look to Jesus, "the Prince of Peace". (Isaiah 9:6) Louis A. Rongioni states: "Since Christ came to destroy the rule of Satan which made for confusion, dissension, and strife and to establish in its place the perfect reign of peace; He was peacemaker *par excellence*." (pages 139-140) This is true because, as St. Paul acclaimed: "In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Col. 1:19-20) If we follow his example, we will become excellent peacemakers also.

The last beatitude that I will present is the sixth one: "Blessed the pure in heart; for they shall see God." To be pure of heart is to be pure in one's intention. To have this blessed attitude requires that we allow the Holy Spirit to free us from selfish motives. "For from the heart come evil intentions: murder, adultery, fornication, theft, perjury, slander. These are the things that make a man unclean." These words of Jesus emphasize the importance of keeping our hearts pure.

Segundo Galilea writes: "To be pure of heart means to have a genuine interior life in conformity with the law of God. More precisely, the "pure in heart" are those who are unflagging in their efforts to uproot all deceit from their hearts, along with any other evil tendencies that may lurk there." (page 60)

Sins always come from an unclean heart and are avoided by our having simplicity of heart. To have simplicity of heart means to have an uncomplicated intentionality and utter sincerity. Those who are simple of heart desire only to love God, neighbor, and self in a pure way. They avoid occasions of sin, strive to keep their minds occupied with legitimate pursuits, try to control their thoughts and emotions, and cultivate healthy relationships. They do not regard sexual intercourse as evil, but realize that, in accord with the Scriptures, it must be confined to a marital relationship with one member of the opposite sex. Simplicity keeps the heart pure.

As the second part of the sixth beatitude implies, we strive to keep our hearts pure because we are intent on seeing God in heaven. But that cannot happen unless we are already experiencing God's presence on earth. Galilea maintains:

The experience of God is nothing other than the fruit of Christian contemplation....The path of Christian contemplation is the relentless road of death to the "old self" (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9) – the selfish, idolatrous, human being within us – and our rebirth as disciples and followers of Jesus in the spirit of the Beatitudes....The experience of God is historical; and herein it

departs from all non-Christian forms of contemplation....The God of Jesus reveals himself in the heart of each person; but he reveals himself in historical reality as well. Christian contemplation is the experience of the love of a God who seeks to bring his kingdom to realization in us, in our neighbor, and in society. (pages 63, 65, 66)

With these words, we can sense that the sixth beatitude brings to the forefront all of the other beatitudes. Its main virtue – simplicity – focuses our attention on God's purposes. Such focus increases in each one of us the virtues that are central to the other beatitudes: humility, forgiveness, doing justice or hope-giving behavior, prudence, perseverance or faith-building behavior, and peacemaking or love-enhancing behavior. Another virtue – patience - is of importance in several of the beatitudes and so could possibly be designated an eighth primary virtue among the eight beatitudes, but I will remain with the seven I have designated.

I pray that my presentation has enabled you in some ways to grow in each of these virtues and thereby to attain the happiness that Jesus promises for those who practice the beatitudes – a joy that begins here on earth but will find its fulfillment only in eternity.