

Toward a Blessed Life: How to Understand and Live the Beatitudes



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12 25-Minute Talks on 4 Audio CDs

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Program Summary

You may have memorized them when you were 7 years old and you may even be able to repeat them now, but are you experiencing the fullness of the Beatitudes today?

What does it mean to hunger and thirst for justice in a world filled with hunger? How do you comfort those who mourn? Do you count yourself among those pure of heart? What does it mean to be a disciple? Pursue these answers and more with Capuchin Michael Crosby, as you learn to incorporate the core of Matthew's Gospel into your daily life.

Br. Crosby has been unlocking the meaning and context of the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount for faithful Catholics for 30 years. Now you can benefit from his insight with this new program, *The Spirituality of Jesus' Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel* from Now You Know Media.

It has been said that the Beatitudes as written in Matthew are a summary of the Sermon on the Mount and that the Sermon on the Mount summarizes the whole of Matthew's Gospel, the "Gospel of the Church." Nowhere has this been demonstrated so clearly as in this 24-lecture series by Br. Crosby.

A deeper examination of Matthew's Gospel shows that while this "code of conduct," laid out in the Beatitudes, is meant for all people, one group in particular is called to be formed by its values—personally, communally and collectively. This group are those known as his disciples, those who constitute his church, his new household, his new way of relatedness.

Jesus' disciples are those who follow him in his vision and effort to create an alternative community, defined by the "Beatitudes," or way of life, defiant of the wider culture. Following his way of wisdom, as outlined in Matthew's Beatitudes, Jesus' disciples build their lives, their relationships as well as their organizations, including the church itself, to be a house built on solid rock so they can be "salt for the earth" and "light for the world."

About Your Presenter



Brother Michael Crosby is a Capuchin Franciscan. He lives in community with other friars in a downtown Milwaukee parish that serves the urban poor, homeless and marginalized. Since 1973 Br. Crosby has been a pioneer among Catholics in promoting corporate reform through socially responsible investing. He was influential in getting Catholics to work with the Protestant and Jewish communities in this effort at the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR). He has been very involved in a wide range of issues—from South African and infant formula to global warming and tobacco control. He coordinates the work of religious institutions in the Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota (WIM) and Dakotas (CRI) who are part of the ICCR.

Br. Crosby's preaching and writing on contemporary biblical discipleship has taken him around the world. Toward this end he gives retreats, workshops and parish missions. He has written seventeen books. His book on the Beatitudes, published in 1981, has had more than 20 printings. All of his latest books have received awards from the Catholic Press Association of Canada and the United States, including a First Place for *Can Religious Life Be Prophetic?* and Second Place for books on "Spirituality" in 2008 for *Finding Francis, Following Christ* (Orbis, 2007). Br. Crosby has also published *The Paradox of Power: Moving from Control to Compassion in a Violent World* (Crossroads, 2008) and *Spirituality of the Beatitudes* (Orbis, 2005).

Topic 1: The Context in Matthew's Gospel for the Beatitudes

- I) Welcome to this series which examines what arguably might be called the most unexamined teachings of Jesus, the Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel.
 - a. Goal: to present the Beatitudes in the context of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount to help you put them into practice and thus "build your house" on rock.
 - b. 2007 article in *Policy Review* by Tod Lindberg: "What the s Teach."
 - i. "The Beatitudes provide a dizzying commentary designed to turn upside down the political and social world of the Roman Empire of Caesar Augustus and of the Jewish religious elite of Judea and Jerusalem. This is the opening move of a more drastic and fundamental reassessment of political and social affairs, applying not only to its own time but to all future times, down to our day" (3-4).
 - ii. "Jesus offers a description of the community of goodwill his teaching will build in this world" (4).
- II) My journey climbing the Mount of Beatitudes that has been taking place for 35 years.
 - a. My start: wanting to give a series of talks on Beatitudes. Decided I could get 8 talks with Matthew (who has 8 Beatitudes) rather than Luke who has 4.
 - b. The more I read Matthew's Gospel and commentaries on it and the Beatitudes, I discovered Matthew's audience was composed of house churches that were more prosperous and quite urban. From an analysis of its contents, it was addressed to people then who don't seem to have been much different than many of us when it comes to putting into practice Jesus' teachings.

- c. The Matthean context
 - i. After Jesus begins his public ministry and named the first four disciples, we read the triad that he *taught* in “their” synagogues, *proclaimed* the good news of the kingdom and *healed* all sorts of diseases (4:23-25).
- III) “Their” synagogues indicates a polarization: a them and us. After the Fall of Jerusalem (cir. 70), probably 80-85.
- IV) By then Mark’s Gospel has already been circulating in the house churches. Matthew uses all but 50 verses of Mark.
- V) Because Jesus had just begun his ministry, it’s not likely his “fame” had spread to Syria *then*. But by the time of Matthew, it had. Thus the house churches seem to have been in Antioch.
- VI) The structure of Matthew’s Gospel
 - a. A beginning (infancy narrative) and end (passion, death, resurrection). In between are five “books” (recalling the Pentateuch).
 - b. Each book has two parts: stories about Jesus and words (sermons or discourses) of Jesus: the “*gesta Christi*” and the “*verba Christi*.”
 - c. The center of the “books” (and the whole gospel) is Mt 12:46-50: Jesus’ creation of the new “household” of brothers and sisters under the “heavenly Father.”
- VII) Beatitudes as the “mission statement” of the Matthean Jesus’ alternative household.
- VIII) Who are these wise ones, these people, families, groups and churches?
 - a. Everyone. Note how the 5 Books end: all *ethnoi*. Jesus’ message is for all.
 - b. Particularly the disciples. Put into practice: lived faith
- IX) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 1-11.

Topic 2: The Beatitudes: A Call for All; The Chosen Way for Disciples

- I) The “First Book” and the first account of the actions of Jesus (*gesta Christi*).
- II) Mt 3:1-17. Jesus’ baptism by John.
 - i. Meaning of baptism: counter-cultural, alternative lifestyle.
 - ii. Jesus’ commitment to John’s baptism: to fulfill all justice.
- III) Mt 4:1-11. Novitiate. 40 days. Time of testing. Stress
 - i. Jesus called “Son” in the theophany. Now the devil tests him.
 - ii. Jesus breaks from “the world” of every day affairs. Society’s expectations.
 - It’s “word” for him.
- IV) Mt 4:12-16. The Matthean Triad
 - i. Violence: Jesus hears that John the Baptist has been arrested.
 - ii. Withdraw
 - iii. To have the Messianic prophecy fulfilled
- V) Mt 4:17. Gospel Summary: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- VI) Mt 4:18-22. The Call to Discipleship
 - a. Peter and Andrew, James and John. Leave the family business and create a new household under the teachings of Jesus, a new kind of “commerce.”
 - b. Recall Economics (*oikos + nomos = oikonomia*) as that which involves the ordering (relationships) of resources among the persons involved in the house.
 - i. Persons: Peter and Andrew in one business. James and John in their father’s business. Traditional family/economic system
 - ii. Resources: Boats and Nets.

- iii. Relationships: they “leave” and choose to follow Jesus. Move from the traditional *oikos* (household) to a new, voluntary association.
- VII) Mt 4:23-25. The Triad of teaching, preaching and healing.
- VIII) The “First Book” and its first account of the teachings of Jesus (*verba Christi*).
- IX) When he saw the crowds, he went up the Mountain.
 - a. Mountain recalling Moses and Sinai but, more importantly,
 - b. In Matthew, “mountain” is the place where we encounter God.
 - c. Once there, “He opened his mouth and began to teach them . . .”
 - d. “To open one’s mouth” in the Semitic language meant to speak with authority.
See ending of the Sermon on the Mount: he spoke with “authority” (Mt 7:29).
- X) First steps in A Model of Biblical Spirituality via “information” found in the Beatitudes.
 - a. **Inspiration**
 - b. Discipleship: **Imitation**: His disciples made him change his mind.
 - c. **Integration**: Putting words and deeds more into practice. Discipline. Following the pattern of the teacher. The evangelical life-coach.
 - d. **Identification**: 9th Beatitude
- XI) .A further word on authorship and followership: Matthew “*Matthaios*” and disciples(hip): “*mathēthēs*” and “*matheteutheis*.” The Matthew of Matthew’s gospel is anyone of us who take Jesus’ words in the First Gospel seriously and are trying to build our lives and relationships around its message and take that message everywhere in the world.
- XII) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 12-20.

Topic 3: The Meaning of “Beatitudes”

- I) Examine the meaning of “beatitudes” as culturally-approved patterns of behavior.
 - a. Contrasted with the wider society’s “beatitudes” or values.
 - i. In homily at the Mount of Beatitudes, near Moshav Korazim in Israel, Pope John Paul II said (3.24.00) to the crowd around him that day, especially young people that Jesus’ words in the Beatitudes “present a challenge which demands a deep and abiding *metanoia* of the spirit, a great change of heart” (686).
 - ii. The Beatitudes are not ways to make it better in society but to “be better” in society. If that means, as Tod Lindberg noted in the first topic, that this will set us against the values of our Empire and our Religion, such is the cost of discipleship that this promises.
 - b. Examples of those whose Beatitudes stood against society’s beatitudes.
- II) Beatitude from “*beatus*” (Latin). The Latin translated “*makarios*”
 - a. Way different cultures “bless.”
 - b. My experience of the special blessing at parish in Colleyville, TX.
- III) Original word--*ashre* in Hebrew. People were *ashre* if they had the well-being that came from being in right relationship with their neighbor and, therefore, with God.
 - a. Somehow there were two meanings of *ashre* when it got translated into the Greek.
- IV) The first was *eulogia*. God’s blessing or favor on a person/community.

- V) The second was *makarios*. This was a blessing associated with a community's favorable thoughts about people who acted in a certain way that exhibited right relationships among God, themselves, and others. Often these implied such a person was wise and just.
- VI) The "markarisms" in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount and Sermon of the Parables are in the tradition of wisdom literature. Betz: "All of them declare in one form or another that the one blessed deserves this state of being because of 'the wisdom displayed before God and humanity' [quoting Kieffer]. This wisdom is based on the divine justice or righteousness revealed in the Torah." (94). "The final authority on which the Beatitudes are based is God's justice, a concept fundamental to the Sermon on the Mount." (95)
- VII) One of the most used alternatives to the word "blessed" for *markarios* is "happy."
- a. Insufficient meaning, given its trivialization in contemporary society.
 - b. Often linked to "happiness" indicati dealing with "(financial) success."
- VIII) Jesus' last word about what *makarios* and let's just make sure we disciples show what those Beatitudes mean in the translation of our lives individually and communally.
- a. It's "they," "those" and "their;" not me, myself and I.
 - b. Tod Lindberg, in *Policy Review*: "The Beatitudes categorize *groups* of people. He does not say 'blessed is *the one* who is poor in spirit,' but rather 'blessed are the poor in spirit'; not 'the mourner' but 'those who mourn.' . . . Jesus calls people to think of themselves in relation to others like them, even if the others are people with whom they previously have felt nothing in common" (8).
- IX) Matthew ends the Sermon the Mount highlighting those who hear his word and put it into practice. Pope Benedict XVI notes they are to be put into practice "not just [as]

informative speech, but performative—not just [as] the imparting of information, but action, efficacious power that enters the world to save and transform it” ().

X) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pp. 8-16.

Topic 4: Jesus: The Example of What it Means to be Poor in Spirit

- I) The difference between the Beatitudes of Luke and Matthew.
 - a. Most agree that, in addition to Mark as their primary source, both Matthew and Luke depended on another source from which they drew in common. This non-Markan source (the second source for much of their gospels) is called “Q” (after the German word *quell*).
 - b. Great difference in two key Beatitudes: Is it Blessed are 1) the poor in spirit or “you” who are “poor” and 2) those who hunger and thirst for justice or “you” who hunger now?
 - c. Difference is determined not around which Jesus may have said, but why Luke and Matthew had Jesus saying it the different ways: the situation of their house churches as their audience.
- II) Is the promise the “kingdom/kingdom of heaven” or the “kingdom/kingdom of God”? Why the difference?
- III) Our core question as we approach this Beatitude. How will it help me/us:
 - a. Love God more fully, love our neighbor more authentically and love ourselves in the way God loves us.
 - b. “Fulfill all justice,” or in the right way, to make all our relationships in our lives, families, groups and institutions as just and loving as possible.
- IV) The historical Jesus as a mirror of this Beatitude
 - a. Matthew 26:39. Not my will but yours be done.
 - i. Not God’s will that Jesus die

- ii. But God's will that Jesus be faithful to the gospel that would lead to the cup of suffering/death he knew was at hand.
 - iii. If poverty means nothing, then, in the depth of Jesus spirit, his "I am," there was nothing between him and God. When that happens, God is our all, our everything. The "kingdom/kingdom" of God is all that we have.
 - b. Matthew 11:2-6
 - i. Context: John heard about the "works" the Christ was performing.
 - ii. Note juxtaposition of "blessed" and "scandalize"
 - c. Why this was a fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-2b. The creation of a new social order.
 - d. Why, since we have the Spirit of the Lord upon us, it must be fulfilled in us. Let's now see how we can do this.
- V) What is an offense against this Beatitude? The *scandalon*. The obstacle; the stumbling blocks
 - a. Entitlement
 - b. The more I have the happier I will be.
 - c. "I'll do it myself."
 - d. Making gods of whatever: David Brooks' column "The God that Fails" in the *NYT* 01.01.10..
 - i. Our companies get downsized.
 - ii. Our parties, presidents, prime ministers fail to deliver on their promises.
 - iii. Our priests, ministers and gurus are shown to have clay feet
 - iv. Our celebrities let us down.
 - v. Our "way of life" no longer works

Topic 5: What do we mean by “Poor in Spirit”

- I) Personal experience of discovering how I was not “poor in spirit” but righteous.
- II) Janet Sullivan: Remember Jesus’ saying about the religious leaders and their righteousness: he did not consider them call-able; rather he came to those who admitted their fallenness and need.
- III) Me going into treatment for anger.
 - a. If I have no need for anyone, I have no need for God.
 - b. Made the first three steps of Twelve Step Spirituality
- IV) Bumper stickers: Let Go, Let God
- V) “Letting Go:” the heart of all spiritualities.
 - a. Jewish spirituality. Root word for blessing (*baruck*) is same as “knee” (*bereck*), bend the knee
 - b. Taoism
 - c. Benedictine and Jesuit: humility, arrogance, modesty; Nancy Gibbs’ article in *Time* 11.09.09.
 - d. Buddhists: Detachment leading to Enlightenment
 - e. Carmelite: Nada leading to Mystical Marriage
 - f. Franciscan: Poverty leading to Union.
 - g. Josephite: Renunciation leading to Love

- h. French school. *Abandonment to Divine Providence*
 - i. Passive dimension. Letting God be God in my life.
 - ii. Active dimension. Being totally open to the Spirit of God to let God's spirit work in me to continue the work of creation, of Jesus' works.
 - 1. Radically dedicated to God's will. Doing God's will at heart of Matthew's Gospel.
 - 2. One of the petitions in the Lord's Prayer.
- VI) What do we mean by God's will in Matthew? Do disclaimers. It represents a basic stance toward God, my neighbor and self. This involves four related elements.
- a. Doing good.
 - i. The two sons. Who did "will of Father?" The one who did good/justice.
 - ii. Micah 6:8. God's will = Doing Good.
 - iii. Lubavichers to this day (see ad in *NYT*, 03.30.07).
 - iv. Dad's death: "I never heard about anyone doing so much good."
 - b. Bearing (good) fruit. End of Sermon on Mount.
 - c. Good fruit produces a rich harvest; being "worthy" of good fruit.
 - d. The rich harvest is the harvest of justice: making all things right
- VII) Hans Dieter Betz: First Beatitude is summary of all the others as well as the whole Sermon on the Mount. Why? Because it's all about how we live and act in a way that conforms with the "Will of our Father" in Heaven.
- VIII) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 39-49.

Topic 6: The Woman with the Alabaster Jar as Model of Poor in Spirit

- I) Rich, Young Man (Mt 19:16-22): “What good deed must I do to have eternal life.”
 - a. Eternal life, everlasting life and “kingdom” virtually synonymous in Matthew
 - b. He was not able to “go further” into the way of perfection/godliness by reordering his life on behalf of those in need, the poor.

- II) Story of the Woman (Mt 26. 6-13).
 - a. Jesus says she “did good,” she did “a good deed.”
 - b. Doing good at heart of Gospel.
 - c. Doing Good to the Poor who are always with us defines if we are actively abandoned to God by being Poor in Spirit before God and committed to our neighbor who is Poor.
 - d. Unfortunately what we remember is: “The poor you will always be with you.”
 However, we already know, that if the poor are with me, I’ve got to do something about it. So we look to Jesus’ elevation of this woman as a model of one who shows us the way, especially when we are those with is be the wise ones who know what we need to do with our excessive gold, frankincense and myrrh.

- III) Elaborate on the story.
 - a. Context = the “house,” the *oikia*. Woman modeling Jesus’ gospel economy (*oikonomia*).

- IV) Persons (Jesus and the woman)

- V) Relations (“she came to him” . . . “at table” [table fellowship])

- VI) Resources (“very expensive ointment” . . . “alabaster jar”)
 - a. By pouring the ointment on Jesus’ head, she has done a “good deed”

- b. “Wherever in the world the gospel is proclaimed, what she did shall be told in memory of her.”
 - i. Our individual *oikias*
 - ii. Our families and group *oikonomias*
 - iii. Our institutions throughout the whole inhabited world (*oikoumene*)
 - iv. Whole world = *oikologia*
 - c. Woman in class at LMU: “The woman with the alabaster jar” shows us that all of us “want Christ to tell us that we will be remembered for our selfless deeds.”
- VII) A contemporary example of this Beatitude.
- a. Aunt Mary Bouser as a contemporary example for Michael Crosby of the woman.
 - b. Jean Vanier, founder of L’arche (and son of the former Governor General of Canada) as the contemporary portrait of one who has lived as “Poor in Spirit.”
 - i. When he was a young man, culturally and prestige wise, he gave up quite a bit to spend the rest of his life living with developmentally disabled people. Many of these we have Down’s Syndrome. In some ways, both Vanier and every such person should be highlighted as a model of being “Poor in Spirit,” for this is what they are.
 - ii. “My hope and my prayer is that when my moment of weakness comes, I will be able to accept it and rejoice over what is given to me.” "Human life begins in frailty and ends in frailty. During our whole life we remain avid for security and dependent on tenderness. . . . To love is to be vulnerable."
- VIII) V. For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 50-54.

Topic 7: What the Kingdom/Kindom of Heaven Is Not

- I) Blessed are the Poor in Spirit; Theirs IS the Kingdom/Kindom (*basileia*) of Heaven.
 - a. First and last Beatitudes make promise of each in present tense.
 - b. The Greek really says “Kingdom of the heavens.”
 - c. If people are truly “poor in spirit,” abandoned to God’s will, committed to only doing good, there is nothing between them and God; the kingdom/kingdom or reality of God is already “with them.”
- II) Mark’s “Kingdom of God” often becomes Matthew’s “Kingdom of Heaven.”
- III) Pope John Paul II: July 21, 1999 talk.
 - a. Heaven is not “a physical place in the clouds, but a living, personal relationship with the Holy Trinity.”
 - b. “It is always necessary to maintain a certain restraint in describing these ‘ultimate realities’ since their depiction is always unsatisfactory. Today, personalist language is better suited to describing the state of happiness and peace we will enjoy in our definitive communion with God.”
 - c. Father Raymond, OCSO: “Heaven begins on earth or it never begins at all.”
 - d. Jesus’ “kingdom/kingdom/house-order” subversive to that of the empire (*basileia*)
- IV) The “Kingdom of Heaven” is not limited to:
 - a. One scripture text or one group over others.
 - i. Equation of “Kingdom/Kindom” with a biblical text. Outside this there is no kingdom or salvation or eternal life.

1. Equation of “Kingdom/kingdom” with a religion. Before the Vatican Council this was the way a Catholic like me understood it.
 2. “Outside the church” there is no salvation.
- ii. Blind eye to other texts
 - iii. Texts showing the “kingdom/kingdom” is beyond any one text or group.
 1. Mt 8: 5-13: Many will come from East and West and find a place.
 2. Mt 25: 31-46: Last judgment scene: Lord, Lord. From every nation.
- b. Religious externals if these are not connected with “doing good” as God’s will.
 - i. Mt 7:21-23. Charismatic expressions and “evil-doers.”
 - ii. It is clear from Matthew (and Mark 3:4 has it explicitly) that not to do good in the face of need, is “evil doing.”
 - c. The “oughts” of religion (rules, regulations, rituals).
 - i. Mt 5:20: Unless your justice exceeds that of the S + P you won’t be part of the Kingdom/Kingdom of God.
 - ii. Mt 5:21-47: Rules and Regulations; yet I say to you.
 - iii. Mt 5:48: In a word, be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.
 - iv. Mt 19:16-22: Rich, young man. Going further than Creeds, Codes and Catechisms to the heart of relationships: Loving God, doing justice.
- V) V. For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 21-26.

Topic 8: What the Kingdom/Kindom of Heaven Is: The Role of Parables

- I) Jesus begins public ministry with: Change your allegiance, your way of living/relating, for the kingdom/kingdom of God/heaven is at hand.
 - a. Kingdom a notion in time/space. No longer sufficient, given science
 - b. Develop other words: regency, realm (coin of the realm); reign.
- II) *NYT* piece (06.28.05). Gibraltar Journal: “Where Britain Reigns but Monkeys Rule.”
- III) Moving the noun to a verb: a way of relating.
- IV) Therefore better to call it “kingdom” than “Kingdom”
 - a. “Heaven” as another name for God.
 - i. We Christians have come to see God as Trinity.
 - ii. Develop Trinity and contemporary/non-biased words for Trinity.
 - iii. Trinity as model and goal of all creation/humanity. The Economic Trinity as model/archtype of all “households”
 - 1. **Persons** not so much as individuals (leading to separation), but absolutely connected
 - 2. **Relationally**: Mutually interdependent.
 - 3. **Resources** shared equally. Commonwealth.
 - b. Goal of Life/How, then, am I to live? What, then, am I to do? Trinitarian.
 Personal, communal, collectively. Anything falling short of trinity is, to that degree, an antidote to the blessing. An offense to God and humanity, sinful.
- V) How do we move from our various “kingdoms” to the Kindom?
- VI) “The Kingdom of God is like:” The role of parables.

- a. Mt 5:1-7:29: Sermon on Mount = first of the teachings.
- b. Mt 13:1-53: Sermon of Parables = third of teachings. All about kingdom/kingdom.

Them and us re: understanding. Understanding in Matthew (unlike Mark's "understanding" as density) = putting the teaching into practice.

- i. Mt 4:17: Matthew's Jesus said there must be conversion if we are to be part of the kingdom/kingdom's way.
- ii. Way of the parables manifesting the way of conversion.
- iii. Process of conversion
 - 1. Difficult or not?
 - 2. Whole economy of the "market" is based on conversion through the process of seeking, finding, selling, buying.
 - 3. Evangelical model of conversion: seek, find, sell, buy as summarized in Mt 13:44-46.
 - 4. Mt 6:33: "Seek first the kingdom [of the heavenly father]; then . . ."
 - 5. Why do we find the one conversion (i.e., "market") so easy—an actual "way of life"—and the other so difficult?
 - 6. The former is tangible; the latter is spiritual. But non-the-less *real* for those who believe.

VII) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 26-38.

Topic 9: Jesus: Model of Mourning and Comfort

- I) Something very hopeful about this Beatitude. Note the element of hope in the opening words of Handel's *Messiah*
- II) This Beatitude, probably more than others, speaks to human condition especially vis-à-vis our broken places. Shows "holiness" is "wholeness." The sacred person as one who is the caring to those in need. He or she is an angel of comfort to those in need.
- III) As we begin our reflections on the 2nd Beatitude, let us recall our goal of each Beatitude. To see it as a concrete way we can
 - a. Work toward fulfilling the great command of loving God, neighbor and self.
 - b. Work toward the fulfillment of all justice or being right with everyone.
- IV) Jesus as the mirror or model of this Beatitude. Where did he himself mourn in a way that brought him comfort?
 - a. His very name, Jesus: the one who saves others in their predicament, their sin.
 - b. In his own personal life, Jesus experienced this Beatitude himself.
 - i. Individual life: Mt 26:38: In the Garden, "My heart is nearly broken with sorrow."
 - ii. Interpersonal level: Death of John the Baptist in Mt 14:12-13: withdraw, called forth into compassion for others in their sickness and sorrow (Mt 14:14ff). Became an angel of comfort to others in their need.
 - iii. Institutional level: Mt 23:37ff: Diatribe over the leaders' unwillingness to convert that moves to lament. "How I yearned to gather your children together, as hen gathers her young under her wings. But you were

unwilling.” His comfort came from “letting go” of his dream that his religion would welcome his message. He was free of its sin.

- c. We read similar passages in the Old Testament:
 - i. Lord heals the broken-hearted and lifts every crushed spirit, Ps. 34:19.
 - ii. Jeremiah, speaking of the utter loss of the people in exile and the promise of their restoration prophesied: Jer. 31:13 “I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them. . .”
 - iii. Is 61: Different sections, including verse 9 about being “blessed”
- V) Who is the Servant of Yahweh, One with Spirit? It’s us.
- VI) The “victory of justice” comes to us only when we admit our own mourning and, thus, become angels of comfort to others in theirs.
- VII) Other words/images/actions for “MOURN” and “COMFORT.”
 - a. Mourn
 - i. The word for “mourning” in Jewish literature, Hans Dieter Betz writes: “displays the full range of kinds of grief, from personal loss to lament over Israel, the state of this world, and one’s own failure and sinfulness” (120).
 - ii. Other words.
 - b. Comfort: Other words.
- VIII) The “*skandalon*” (stumbling block) that keeps this Beatitude from being realized.
- IX) Denial. If we don’t admit the mourning/pain, it controls us.
- X) Delusion: that everything is okay. No problem.
- XI) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 59-66.

Topic 10: Blessed Those Who Mourn; They Will Be Comforted

- I) Review of what we've said in Topic 9.
- II) Applying the Beatitude.
 - a. In our individual lives.
 - i. Dealing with our sins and obsessions.
- III) Sin: story of W.W. and Steubenville.
 - a. Priest "resting in the Lord."
 - b. Deacon obsessed with an inmost sin
 - c. Challenge to me: "Mike, why don't you go to Steubenville!"
- IV) "Issues:" Anger, deny, project, need for recovery.
 - a. Dealing with the "sin of the world" that impacts us re: loss and pain
 - b. Interpersonal Level: Transferring our anger into grieving or lament. Recognition that certain things just won't change. But other examples.
 - c. Systemic Level: Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.
 - i. How ineffective our anger can be re: things that won't change.
 - ii. Find ways, like Jesus, to "withdraw." At least by not letting such "sins" become our sins.
 - iii. Lament
 - d. Weeping over the ecological degradation.
- V) Points to remember as we appropriate this Beatitude into our lives.
 - a. We can't rush into healing. It's a cultural thing. Some can "enter into mourning" easier. Same with comfort.

- b. No “cookie cutter” way to help move from mourning to comfort in our lives. See Philip Chard, “Grieving at Own Pace Is Vital,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 10.22.09.
 - c. Don’t be afraid of waiting.
- VI) Committing ourselves to be ministers of comfort to others in need.
- a. This is not just giving when there’s a disaster
 - b. It’s working with people who are broken to keep a real disaster from taking place.
 - c. Identifying with the victim—from the womb to the tomb.
 - d. Wherever we find ourselves in solidarity with victims, we have been given the power not only to mourn with them, but to do what we can to bring them comfort.
By doing this we will be blessed and be a blessing to others in their mourning.
- VII) Model of this: Mother Theresa.
- a. Brought comfort to the most destitute in their brokenness
 - b. She herself was destitute regarding her (non) experience of God and God’s comforting in her life.
- VIII) Final Prayer: 2 Cor 1:3-7.
- IX) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 66-80.

Topic 11: Jesus the Model of Meekness/Nonviolence in the Land

- I) Notion of “meekness” in many cultures as problematic. Obstacle to getting to the heart of the Beatitude.
 - a. Why? Possibly its English origin: its roots in the Old Norse are *mjark*, meaning “soft.”
 - b. Jesus was no “softie.”
- II) As we begin, we ask how this Beatitude might help us
 - a. Grow in our love of God, neighbor and self
 - b. Work for right relationships or justice with ever-widening circles throughout the earth/land entrusted to our care.
- III) “Meek” in Greek is *praÿs*. Hans Dieter Betz: *A-praÿs* represented different forms of violence (126). Given this understanding, the *scandalon* or stumbling block to living in the land under the reign of God is violence. Nonviolence is the beatitudinal way.
- IV) *Praÿs* unique to Matthew’s Gospel. Used three times: 5:5; 11:29; 21:5
- V) In Mt 21:5 we have a perfect story that embodies his nonviolent way vis-à-vis relating to “the land,” how he wanted to live in this world.
 - a. Chapter 21 as part of wider discussion in Matthew (20:20-23:39) regarding the different approaches to authority of Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees.
 - b. Jesus’ nonviolent entrance into the center of the Jewish universe (i.e., “Jerusalem”) contrasted with

- c. Violent response of the chief priests and the scribes [saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ they were indignant” (Mt 21:14-15).
- VI) Examine what makes *us* indignant or angry?
- a. A challenge to our “wealth” in the form of power, possessions, image (prestige/pride)
 - b. A non-acknowledgement of these forms of “wealth” as well.
 - c. So, instead of reacting to all these threats with praʉs or nonviolence, we, individually, in our groups, in our nations and church, respond with violence. Just like the leadership group of Jesus’ day did to him.
- VII) Old Testament basis for this Beatitude.
- a. Psalm 37:11: “the meek shall possess the land.”
 - b. Going deeper into notion of land/earth as wealth.
 - i. Hebrew word *‘eretz* meant land and earth.
 - ii. Same with Greek translation of land and earth as “*gē*” or “*gaia*.”
 - iii. Latin distinguished between land as *terra* and earth as *mundus*.
 - c. Deuteronomy’s notion of land/earth of Israel as “wealth.” Dt 8:7-9a; 11-13; 17-18 as representative.
 - i. The original “bootstraps” theology!
 - ii. “Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the Lord your God is the one who gave you the power to get that wealth” (Dt. 8:17-18).
- VIII) . For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 85-87.

Topic 12: Blessed Are the Meek/Nonviolent; They Will Inherit the Earth/Land

- I) This Beatitude vs the “prosperity gospel” preached in some churches today.
- II) “Inherit” vs. “possess” the land/wealth and its related sense of entitlement.
 - a. My experience first time in Ireland. It’s all by my own work.
 - b. Voice of my Mother: it’s all way you inherited.
 - c. Thankfulness and gratitude rather than aggrandizement.
- III) Developing Mt 5:5 around the notion of land and earth as “wealth”
- IV) John Kenneth Galbraith: Wealth as power, possessions, prestige.
 - a. Just before Sermon on the Mount we see Jesus, leaving “the land” to go into the wilderness to be tested, successfully, around challenges to these three forms of wealth.
 - b. Previous talk. Jesus’ meek entrance to Jerusalem elicited violence.
- V) Examining each of these three (possessions, power and prestige) to see if they will be a blessing or a stumbling block in our relationships in addressing issues of personal, group or organizational power, possessions and prestige.
 - a. “Our” possessions.
 - i. Pat and “Hippie”: If “one of them” ever stepped on my property, I’d shoot ‘em.
 - ii. But look at other way in families, inheritance, stop talking, etc.
 - iii. U.S. expenditures on domestic, global “security” for “homeland.”

- iv. St. Francis: my brothers, let us not acquire property, lest we have to take up arms to protect it.
 - b. “Our” power. Power as “the ability to influence.” (For more on this see my *The Paradox of Power* and its DVD in www.choosingcompassion.net).
 - i. Positive power grounding us (and others) in care.
 - ii. Negative power grounding us (and others) in control.
 - iii. Personal examples: “Correction without care is control.”
 - iv. Application globally: Nigeria, for one..
 - c. “Our” image, our honor, our reputation, our pride or prestige.
 - i. The last form of wealth we “let go” of.
 - ii. Tendency to define our “I am” from our roles and functions.
 - iii. Consequence: Don’t accept our “I am” as very good, but with the function of being a good _____.
- VI) Developing the third use of *prāṽs*. The “yoke” of Jesus’ meekness (Mt 11:28-30).
- a. The importance of this is evident in that it is expressed in a triad.
 - i. Come to me. This means “leaving” another way.
 - ii. Take my yoke upon your shoulders. In contrast to the yoke of the law or some other forms of violence.
 - iii. Learning from Jesus involves “unlearning” other ways.
 - b. Applying the triad to the spiritual journey and conversion through the steps of inspiration, imitation, integration and identification.
- VII) Josephine Bakhita (1869-1947): model of this Beatitude, made a saint in 2009
- a. Born in Sudan, sold as slave, ended up in Italy as a Canossian sister.

- b. An image for those still enslaved by power, possessions, prestige.
 - c. Trafficking of women and children still continues in our “developed” world.
- VIII) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 81-85; 88-99.

Topic 13: Jesus: Model of One Who Hungered and Thirsted for Justice

- I) The relevance of this Beatitude today.
 - a. Data on “satisfaction” by Marshall and Kelly Goldsmith (*BW* 12.21.09).
 - b. Jesus showing that ultimate satisfaction comes from considering benefit for others, not self.

- II) Need to distinguish between the wording of this Beatitude in Luke and Matthew.
 - a. Nothing good about hunger, unless we are undergoing it as part of some kind of fasting to bring about something better.
 - b. Hunger and thirst as signs basic rights are not being met. Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 65.
 - c. Hans Dieter Betz: “striving for righteousness is the highest goal for the Sermon on the Mount” (146).

- III) As we begin recall our common question at the start of each Beatitude:
 - a. How is this Beatitude going to help me fulfill the Great Command, especially in the way I can hunger and thirst for God and do what I can to meet the needs of those around me, as one committed to love them as myself?
 - b. How can my reflections on this Beatitude help move toward fulfilling ALL justice (and removing the obstacle or stumbling block of ALL injustice)?

- IV) Jesus as the Gospel Portrait of this Beatitude’s fulfillment.
 - a. The two accounts of the Multiplication of the Loaves in Matthew 14 and 15; core dynamics are the same.
 - i. They all ate and were SATISFIED.

1. Nobody got more than anybody else; there was neither distinction nor discrimination.
 2. Jesus' commitment to bring about just justice stood in direct opposition to the world where women and children did not count.
 3. "Taking, blessing, breaking and giving" demands that, if this in its sacrament expression, is to be truly a sacrament, it must be celebrated in this model of equality for all at all levels.
- ii. Jesus giving his very self in the form of bread and wine to satisfy the hunger and thirst of every human heart.
- V) Matthew is unique in the use of the word "justice" (7 times). In Greek it is *dikaiosynē*. Mark never uses it and Luke has it only in the Benedictus of Zachary which, scholars tell us, was already part of the cultic prayers of the early church.
- a. The use of "justice" vis-à-vis John the Baptist
 - i. Mt 3:15: First words from Jesus' mouth. A new order.
 - ii. Mt 21:31-32: Prostitutes and tax collectors accepted John's "way."
 - b. Next five uses of the word will be found in the Sermon on the Mount.
- VI) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 100-106.

Topic 14: Justice at the Heart of the Structure of the Sermon on the Mount

- I) “Blessed are Those who Hunger and Thirst for Justice or Righteousness: They Will be Satisfied.”
 - a. Applicability beyond personal “righteousness” all the way to social justice.
 - b. Hans Dieter Betz: “The Sermon on the Mount does not seem to distinguish between the goal of personal righteousness and that of social justice. Both together are envisioned, and indeed one cannot be had without the other” (130).
- II) A “justice” structure for the Sermon on the Mount
 - a. Mt 5:1-16: Introduction with the two Beatitudes involving justice (5:6, 10)
 - b. Mt 5:17-48: Rejecting the scribal/pharisaical notion of “justice” as insufficient for the kingdom/kingdom.
 - c. Mt 6:1-15: Jesus summary of justice involving almsgiving, prayer and fasting
 - d. Mt 6:16-7:23: Choosing between the unjust god of mammon and the kingdom/kingdom of God and God’s way of justice.
 - e. Mt 7:24-29: Building one’s house on the rock by putting these words into practice.
- III) Mt 5:17-48: Going beyond the religious leaders’ notion of justice.
 - a. Religion involves rules and regulations; but when these take away the heart, there’s something wrong.
 - b. Mt 5:20 and 5:48 as the bookends of the six antithesis statements.
 - i. How the Pharisees get a bad rap in Matthew
- IV) Not to the same degree in Luke

- V) Positive role of Pharisees as trying to reconstitute Judaism after Fall of Jerusalem cir. 70 AD.
- VI) Their attempt to get a new identity re: Torah and Table went “too far”
 - a. Result: Separation of Christian house churches from the synagogue with the resulting “them” and “us” dynamics evidenced in Matthew’s gospel.
- VII) Applicability in our lives when we are so adamant about social justice we can walk all over others.
- VIII) Note “Easy to Be Hard” from Hair.
 - a. Tendency of those with power to define reality (also what is “just”).
 - i. The cartoon in the New Yorker of three fish. “The world is just” says the biggest one about to gobble up the other two.
 - ii. Living in the conviction that we are just—until we are confronted with the consequence of what we consider “just.”
 - iii. The evolution of official Catholic Social Teaching/Doctrine about “justice” turning radically at the 1971 Synod of Bishops: *Justice in the World*.
 - 1. For the first time, a solid-enough block of “Non-Western” bishops were able to speak in a way that they were heard.
 - 2. Consequence: Document recognizes injustice
 - a. In the world.
 - b. In the church.
 - c. Injustice against a constitutive element of the Gospel.
- IX) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 106-111.

Topic 15: Evidencing Justice through Almsgiving, Prayer and Fasting

- I) This topic will discuss that notion of justice discussed in Mt 6:1-18. Ideas around justice as almsgiving, prayer and fasting.
 - a. Again note secrecy. The way it is to be done.
 - b. Again note where: In your room; assuming the “house,” the community.
- II) Suspicions about alleged apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary (none of which are obligatory for faith) when she only refers to two of the three: prayer and fasting.
- III) Examining the three forms of “religious observance,” “piety,” “virtue.”
 - a. Almsgiving as a matter of “justice”
 - i. *Tsedeq* as justice and almsgiving in Jewish spirituality.
 - 1. My experience of disproportionate number of Jews in leadership in tobacco control efforts. Why? It’s in their bones.
 - 2. Request of local Milwaukee rabbi to give an example of an individual in his congregation practicing *tsedeq*.
 - 3. Unable: the congregation (note corporate identity) practices *tsedeq*.
 - ii. Application of this in Christian theology.
 - 1. The communal obligation to satisfy the hunger and thirst of others.
 - 2. The right of those “others” who have done whatever they could to get what they need to satisfy their hunger and thirst who “take” from those who have (Thomas Aquinas).
 - iii. The December 2009 outcry when an Anglican priest in York, England talked about taking from the large corporations, not the “little” ones.

- iv. What happens if the theology of justice gets trumped: note the outcry!
- b. Prayer as a matter of “justice”
 - i. St. Thomas Aquinas discussed prayer under “justice” because it refers to what we *owe* God.
 - ii. The core of the Beatitudes and Mt 6:1-18 being prayer, specifically Jesus teaching the “Our Father”/”Lord’s Prayer.”
- IV) This prayer was part of the early church’s *Disciplina Arcana* (the Discipline of the Secret).
- V) Taught catechumens when scrutinizes attested to their sincerity.
- VI) Why? In that culture of Roman Rule, every petition was subversive to its “ways.” See Crosby’s *The Prayer that Jesus Taught Us*.
 - a. The one petition in Prayer that Matthew’s Jesus highlights and develops: the need for mutual forgiveness in order to be forgiven by God.
 - b. Fasting a matter of “justice?”
 - i. Difficulty with “fasting” for those who have approached it from the rubric of a rule: always being hungry.
 - ii. Is 58:1-9 as the exemplary “fast” required by God.
 1. Undoing the thong of the yoke
 2. Setting at liberty the oppressed
 3. Bringing about a new social order
- VII) Example: Mother Maria Skobtsova gave her life for a Jew in a Nazi concentration camp just before the liberation by Russians. Consequence of her hunger and thirst to meet the needs of those around her, especially those who were persecuted as Jews.

VIII) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 111-118.

Topic 16: Mercy beyond the Leaders' "Justice:"

Being Perfected in the Way God is Perfect.

- I) Pope John Paul II, in *Rich in Mercy*: This Beatitude is “the synthesis of the whole of the good news, of the ‘wonderful exchange’ contained therein.”
- II) The connection between justice and mercy.
 - a. The Greek writers of the Old Testament translated *tsedeq* with *dikaiosynē* and *eleēmosynē*. C. H. Dodd: “In place of the comprehensive virtue of *tsedāqāh*, we have justice on the one hand and mercy on the other.”
 - b. Ask for God’s help and grace to see how we can be more merciful so that we can
 - i. Grow in love of God, neighbor and self and, in the process,
 - ii. Bring more justice into the world at all levels of life, for the integrity of God’s people and the planet.
- III) The word “merciful” (*eleēmōn*) is used only here in all the Gospels.
- IV) Jesus as the Model of Mercy.
 - a. You get people like the blind men in different places and the Father of the epileptic boy asking for mercy.
 - b. Then you get others, especially those considered “outsiders” like the Centurion or the Canaanite woman begging him to help their children.
- V) Mt 5:20-48: Matthew’s way of connecting justice and mercy.
 - a. Mt 5:20: “Justice” that must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. . .
 - b. Mt 5:48: “In a word, be perfect in the way your Heavenly Father is perfect.”
 - c. Mt 5:21-47. The antithesis statements of Jesus bringing mercy to “their” justice.

- VI) The context for 5:20-48: The Holiness Codes of Israel.
- a. Lev 19:1-3. The Lord said to Moses, ‘say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy.’”
 - b. In their effort to fulfill this command about becoming holy, the leaders of the Jews developed a whole raft of obligations that got known as the “Holiness Codes.” However, they began from a limited notion of “holiness” seen as sacred, pure, clean, non-bleeders, males, priests vs. their opposite with the conclusion that there would be all sorts of “untouchables,” starting with women who bled.
 - c. We see such holiness codes returning in some Christian groups, like my Catholic Church. Jesus challenged the original interpretation not the need to be holy itself, but the initial equation of holiness with such a purity.
- VII) Jesus’ “Antithesis Statements.” Not so much “but” as eclipsing the law but “may I add something;” “can I offer another dimension”?
- a. Mt 5:21-26: Seeing beyond killing to the need for reconciliation.
 - b. Mt 5:27-30: Going beyond adultery to “lusting in the heart.”
 - c. Mt 5:31-32: Going beyond divorce to the basic need for fidelity to promises in relationships even when the other has violated them.
 - d. Mt 5:33-37: Creating communities of trust in each others’ words without the need for oaths.
 - e. Mt 5:38-42: “Disarming” the one who makes demands by “going the extra mile.”
 - i. Mt 5:43-48: Broadening the notion of love beyond immediate family and kin to a reciprocity that embraces the “enemy” as brother and sister

VIII) Matthew's Jesus wanting "mercy" at the heart of all sacrifice (Mt 9:10 and 12:7).

IX) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 119-126.

Topic 17: Forgiveness: Our Way of Entering God’s Kingdom/Kindom of Mercy

- I) Forgiveness as the way of mercy.
 - a. Connection in the scriptures between the two
 - b. Connecting the two at liturgy: often the cry for mercy is the cry of forgiveness.

- II) The teaching/sermon of the “fourth book” Matthew 18 as revealing a conflicted, unforgiving community of house churches.
 - a. It seems there were quite a few “*scandaloï*” going on in the house churches.
 - b. Jesus outline of affirmation and correction.
 - c. Peter’s challenge: “How many times must “I forgive. . . 70 times?”
 - d. Jesus’ reponse: “Not 7 times, but 70 times 7 times.”

- III) Mt 18:23-35: Jesus’ parable showing the unlimited approach to forgiveness that must be taken by the disciples in the house churches.
 - a. Read the whole parable. Recall that this is “about the kingdom/kingdom” dynamics that must be played out in our lives at all levels: personal, group and societal.
 - i. Note the absolute inability of the person to pay.
 - ii. Total economic servitude. Seizing the whole *oikonomia* of the debtor: persons (himself, his wife, children) and resources (his whole property).
 - iii. The begging request
 - iv. The reaction of the debt-holder
 - v. The result: the one who was “full of debt” is now “full of mercy” or “full of debt-forgiveness”

- vi. The creation of jubilee
 - vii. The unwillingness to extend the “kingdom/kingdom” to another who is also in need, but to a pecuniary amount
 - viii. The anger of the debt-holder: “Should you not have shown mercy to your fellow servant as I showed mercy to you.” Note the parallel regarding “forgive us as we forgive” in Jesus’ Prayer.
- b. The conclusion: “So my heavenly Father will do to everyone one of you, if you do not forgive each other from your heart.”
 - c. Developing from the parable what it means to “forgive from the heart.”
 - i. Father Eilers: “You don’t have any hard feelings in your heart against anyone now, do you?”
 - ii. The triad that creates “forgiveness from the heart.” To make it clearer he tells one of the most powerful parables in the bible. Again, let’s remember how it starts: it’s all about us who hear it becoming “kingdom/kingdom people” by the way forgive each other—and all others—“from the heart.”
- IV) Forgiving the heart as involving a Matthean triad
 - V) A heart moved with compassion
 - VI) Release of the one in need
 - VII) Forgiveness of the debt (including economic).
 - a. Personal
 - b. Communal
 - c. Structural: A week to consider forgiving Haiti’s debt of its 2010 earthquake.
 - VIII) V. For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 132-139.

Topic 18: Compassion: The Kiss of Justice and Mercy

- I) Recall that the Hebrew word *tsedeq* or *tsedaqa* was translated into the Greek by two words: *dikaioisyne* and *eleemosyne*.
- II) A need to rethink Matthew 25:31-46 from “Works of Mercy” to “Works of the *Dikaioi*, the Just Ones.”
 - a. The ones giving the food and drink, etc are *dikaioi*, the word for “just ones.”
 - b. Guilt at not “seeing Christ” in the hungry and needy people I served (as did Mother Theresa).
 - c. Consolation: Jesus “*blesses*” those serving ones, who feed the hungry, etc.
- III) So there’s a justice dimension of the works of mercy; it’s not a matter of whether or not I want to do such things. Justice demands that I do.
- IV) Another word in Greek brings the two notions together: *splagchnizethai*.
 - a. A heart moved with compassion.
 - b. *Splagchnizethai* is the kiss of justice with mercy: it’s cloaking our efforts at justice with the blanket of mercy.
- V) Popular parables centering around *splagchnizethai* are in Luke
 - a. Story of the Good Samaritan (noting that the priest and Levite had to walk by to honor their understanding of the “Holiness Codes”)
 - b. The Compassionate Father toward the Prodigal Son.
- VI) Examine the five times it is used in Mt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34.
 - a. A need is seen; recognized.

- b. The *splagchnizethai* kicks in: the heart is moved with compassion. However this kind of a movement in our heart isn't one that says, "Isn't that too bad." No it sees the injustice in the hunger, the fear, the abuse and harassment, the blindness, the burdens of unemployment and debt and connects these to forms of injustice. It says: there's something wrong here. This is where justice gets kissed with mercy.
 - c. With that kind of heart movement, one feels called to do something about it: to alleviate the need or pain.
- VII) Making *splagchnizethai* "performative" in our hearts rather than "informative" in our lives, let's go deeper into these three ways that bring about blessedness and see if we can address their obstacles.
- a. Obstacles to "seeing" others in need: self-centeredness, preoccupation with own problems, fear, blindness, ideology.
 - b. Obstacles to "having a heart moved with compassion:" compassion fatigue, tired of 'caring,' fear.
 - c. Obstacles to doing something to alleviate the need: Fear (getting hurt, rejected by friends, not knowing what to do), not enough support from others to sustain me.
- VIII) The need to create communities of compassion.
- a. See my DVDs and a CD for study groups. It's called "Choosing Compassion." You can find it on the internet under that title: [Choosing Compassion.net](http://ChoosingCompassion.net).
 - b. We know that when we take on a more reflective and compassionate life that closes no door to that compassion, we need support. Otherwise we can sometimes feel very alone.

- IX) Sarah Horowitz as Model of Compassion, based on her Father's recollection: "What My Daughter Taught Me about Compassion" (*WSJ* 12.26-27.09).

- X) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 126-132.

Topic 19: The Pure of Heart vs. the Addicted Heart

- I) “Blessed are the Pure of Heart; They Shall See God.”
- a. How can this Beatitude help me to develop a purer heart that can love God more wholeheartedly and to love my neighbor as myself?
 - b. How will this help me bring about the Kingdom/Kindom of God’s Justice at all levels of my world?
- II) Another word of “Purity of Heart” means “single-mindedness.”
- a. Corporations looking for “single-hearted” employees: *WSJ*
 - b. Jesus’ Beatitude had a different object: not wealth but God.
- III) Jesus as “pure of heart:” his single-minded commitment to the proclamation of the “good news” of the Kingdom/Kindom or Way of God for our world. In fidelity to this Gospel he was willing to go to the Cross. Nurtured by prayer:
- a. Psalm 24: Here we have the words almost word for word.
 - i. Psalm 24:3-6
 - ii. Psalm 51:10, 16-17: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and just spirit within me . . . For you delight not in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Ps 51:10; 16-17)

- IV) Bill W, the founder of AA, knew what it meant to have a compromised heart and how that can ruin one's life. He always said that the Sermon on the Mount was that which inspired him to lay down the 12 Steps as the way of conversion: "recovery."
- V) How addictions take over our hearts. Develop Mt 6:19-21, 24-34:
- a. The heart as the biblical meaning for what we call "the self." It involves
 - i. Our thinking. The thoughts of our heart. So pure hearts have healthy thoughts.
 - ii. Our feelings and emotions; especially our fears and dreams.
 - iii. Our actions. Remember Jesus saying it is from our heart that one can judge our actions.
 - b. How these themes of "the heart" are in the Sermon on the Mount.
 - i. The way we think involves what Jesus says with the word: "Consider"
 - ii. Our emotions are addressed around our fears. Making sure we get our "fix." Jesus called this "being anxious."
 - iii. And our actions. What happens when we end up being controlled by these forces. Jesus said we can't "serve God and mammon."
- VI) The Greek word here is *douleuein*; literally it means "being given over to."
- VII) In addiction we are given over to the control of alcohol, drugs, sex, shopping, pornography, gambling. Literally, these become "our heart's desire."
- VIII) Comment on "SEEING" God. Not as something visual, but of the heart, given that the Kingdom/Kindom is not a place in time.
- IX) Solanus Casey as a model of one with a "pure heart" to "see God."

- X) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 140-142 and 54-58.

Topic 20 Seeing God: A Way of Contemplation for the Pure of Heart

- I) Even though “purity of heart” means more what was discussed in the previous topic (pure heart vs. addicted heart), it also can be approached as outlining a way to “climb the mount” of contemplation.
- II) Basis for this in Psalm 24:
 - a. Who shall climb the mountain of God
 - b. The ones with clean hands and pure hearts
 - c. Are blessed with the vision of “seeing” God.
- III) Disclaimer. Being from Wisconsin, we have no mountains. But there are principles for mounting climbing that apply to the mountain of meeting God.
 - a. The closer you get to the top the further from the surface you get. Stop being superficial. Being controlled. Getting centered.
 - b. The closer you get to the top the less baggage you take. Not only the physical “stuff” that we’ve run after, but the psychological baggage we carry with unforgiveness as well as the emotional baggage of all our fears.
 - c. The closer you get to the top the less you have to say. It’s in the silence of centering that we move best to “see” God.
- IV) Goal: invert going to the “top” of the mountain to go to our “center.”
- V) How do we do this. Returning to the Sermon on the Mount.
- VI) Mt 6:22-23: Start with the surface baggage. The ways we see that are the obstacles to seeing. Matthew’s Jesus says these are the ways of seeing that are self-centered and stingy rather than other-centered and generous.

- a. Examining what keeps us at the surface rather than the center where we are called to “see” God: the “looks” (Richard Byrne):
 - i. The curious look.
 - ii. The lustful look (pleasure). Remember the addictions.
 - iii. The ideal look.
 - iv. The resentful look.
 - b. Stop running: “Cut it out.” If this is your obstacle, get rid of it. Discipline. The need to get beyond the surface stuff of life
 - c. Hearing the call to go beyond the surface: “Come to me, all you who labor. . . to ‘rest’ in God alone.” That voice comes
 - i. From God
 - ii. From our own discipline. Make it your practice.
 - iii. From others who really look at us free of the looks.
 - d. Responding the call by the ritual of be[com]ing centered, grounded.
 - e. Practicing silence and stillness. And we wait.
 - i. Silence as in a library.
 - ii. Begin to sense the presence.
 - iii. In that silence and sensing we begin to “see” God.
- VII) The actual “seeing” of God is nothing we can create; it’s a pure gift. However we can develop a contemplative stance by the above practice.
- VIII) We come down that mountain refreshed with a contemplative, God-like way of seeing our world.
- IX) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 141-158.

Topic 21: Blessed the Peacemakers; They'll Be Called Children of God

- I) The Seventh Beatitude addresses the urgent needs of our conflict-ridden and war-torn world.
- II) Who are these peacemakers who find themselves in the Blessed household as sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father and, therefore brothers and sisters to each other? The ones who have developed the other Beatitudes.
- III) Biblical basis (recalling Pope Paul VI's "peace is the work of justice"): Wis 12:19: The just ones are God's sons and daughters. To make peace in our households—at the personal, familial and group levels as well as to bring peace into the whole world—we need to work for that justice without which there can be no peace and without which destroys the fabric of community.
 - a. How can this Beatitude help me/us fulfill the Great Command?
 - b. How can this Beatitude inspire me/us to work for those kind of just or right relationships at all levels of life that will expand our hearts to receive everyone and everything as my/our brother and sister?
- IV) The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*. *Shalom* represented the vision of the new order of creation when all things would find their rightful place with each other. The Greek translated "*shalom*" as *eirene*.
 - a. To be "peacemakers" (*eirēnopoioi*) is unique here in Matthew.
 - b. The apostolic discourse (Mt 10) has the disciples proclaiming "peace" to every house. Look for one "worthy."
 - c. My experience making the 30 Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: the business of the Economic Trinity is "making peace."

- d. The “recipe” for *making peace*.
- V) What is this recipe?
- a. We’re going to see in the next topic, that Chapter 18 of Matthew, which I call “Matthew’s Recipe for Peace-Making in Our Households,” offers a very clear pattern of do’s and don’ts to make it happen.
 - b. However here, we are invited to discover the recipe for making peace within our own individual hearts. What are the ingredients?
- VI) I give up the need to control (I take out the main wrong ingredient, since control is at the source of all conflicts)
- VII) I accept myself for who I am (my own version of coming to purity of heart; not defined by others expectations, etc.).
- a. This recipe could transform our world; in the meanwhile we are called to make it in the oven of our hearts.
 - i. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.
 - ii. St. Francis said it well: “They are truly peacemakers, who are able to preserve their peace of mind and heart for love of . . . Christ, despite all that they suffer in this world.”
- VIII) This applies to us at every level of life, including the way we approach death. Example of my brother, Pat Crosby.
- IX) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 159-161.

Topic 22: Matthew's Recipe for Making Peace in Our "House"

- I) Mt 18 as the outline for making peace in ways that will extend the household of sons and daughters of God to bring about a new community of brothers and sisters.
 - a. Applies to all levels of life: personal, communal and organizational/institutional.
 - b. Becoming free of *scandalon*—dynamics leading to tensions, conflicts and wars and creation of ways based on affirmation from which flows correction.
 - c. Insights on how we “go to war” from *Nobody Wanted War: Misperceptions about Vietnam and Other Wars* by Ralph K. White: No matter what grouping, every war has two main causes:
 - i. Immediate Cause. (Give examples)
 - ii. Underlying, attitudinal, ideological causes.
- II) Diabolical enemy image
- III) Virile self-image
- IV) Moral self-image (and indignation at the “other”)
- V) Selective inattention
- VI) Absence of empathy
 - a. These dynamics are in play in every war whether it's wars between nations, culture wars within nations and ideological conflicts within churches.
 - i. Attitudes we need to “cut out.” Jesus: these become stumbling blocks. We are convinced total rightness is one our side. So righteousness sets in. Our cause is right; the other is wrong. We are in; they are out.

- ii. With these attitudes building, all it takes is one incident for war and justification to continue to triumph.
 - b. These dynamics are revealed in every war and every strike; they are pretty much in evidence in talk radio and many TV commentators.
- VII) Example of how the principles led to a “war” with another brother in his house.
 - a. Going to war.
 - b. The invitation to lay down arms
 - c. Creating a household of peace based on Matthew 18.
 - i. 18:1-4: The need to change and for all the brothers and sisters to become like little children if they’ll be part of the kingdom/kingdom of heaven.
 - ii. 18:5-9: Cut out the *scandalon* in our way of looking at each other and acting
 - iii. 18:10-14: Create dynamics of affirmation so that nobody strays
 - iv. 18:15-20: Create dynamics by which the members will be open to correction.
- VIII) 18:15: One on one, go to the person directly
- IX) 18:16: On the worth of two or three
- X) 18:17: Take it to the “church,” the community gathering, the family session.
 - a. The Promise
 - i. 18:18: Wherever this is done, Jesus’ power to bind and loose is operable.
 - ii. 18:19: Ask for the grace to do it.
 - iii. 18:20: If 2 or 3 do it, the promise of Jesus’ abiding presence with us.
- XI) A model of peace-making: Takashi Nagai (1908-1951).

XII) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 161-175.

Topic 23: Blessed Those Persecuted for Justice Sake

The Kingdom/Kindom of Heaven Is Theirs

- I) Note the connection between first and “last” Beatitude: the kingdom/kingdom IS there for the one who practices the first part.
 - a. The fourth and the eighth Beatitudes each stress justice.
 - b. Reiterate that 25% of the Beatitudes deal with justice.
 - c. Who are these who suffer such persecution?

- II) So, as we did with each Beatitude thus far, we begin with Jesus as the model of its fullest expression in each of our lives. To evidence this, I’d like to quote from a 2006 homily of Pope Benedict XVI: “In truth, the [one who is] blessed *par excellence* is only Jesus. He is, in fact, the true poor in spirit, the one afflicted, the meek one, the one hungering and thirsting for justice, the merciful, the pure of heart, the peacemaker. He is the one persecuted for the sake of justice. The Beatitudes show us the spiritual features of Jesus and thus express his mystery... To the extent that we accept his proposal and set out to follow him - each one in his own circumstances - we too can participate in his blessedness” (Homily, 01.01.06).

- III) Reason for Jesus’ persecution: the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom/kingdom and its justice
 - a. Started early in his ministry: challenge to the religious leaders. But his hunger and thirst for such justice led to his persecution and death (Mt 12:1-8).
 - b. Recognition of his justice/innocence by Pilate’s wife: “Have nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered much over him today in a dream.” He too was

guiltless, innocent; the just one who would be persecuted under Pontius Pilate, suffer and be put to death.

- IV) Jesus' call to disciples to take up their cross and follow him/his way of fidelity to the gospel.
- a. Today, "taking up the cross" might mean bearing with your burdens and the problems "life."
 - b. What the notion meant at time of Jesus: living as a challenge to the system.
 - c. Taking up the yoke of Jesus.
 - i. Inspiration
 - ii. Imitation
 - iii. Integration
 - iv. Identification: "If they have done this to me, THEY will do it to you."
"THEY will drag you into their courts and haul you into their synagogues." In other words, your effort at justice will find you opposed both by the leaders of your Empire and your Religion, IF you faithfully proclaim the Gospel of the Kindom of God and witness to it by a life of the Beatitudes.
 - d. Why we won't raise up a model of this beatitude: because it's up to *each of us* to go through the fourfold process of identification with Christ.
- V) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 176-180.

Topic 24: Matthew's Triad of Blessing, Naming and Empowering

- I) The “ninth” Blessed. Recite it, note difference in structure, shift from 3rd to 2nd.
- II) Matthew reading back into time of Jesus the conflict and persecution resulting from separation from the synagogue: them and us.
- III) Parallels in Apostolic Discourse in Chapter 10:
 - a. Sheep/Wolves: so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.
 - b. They will deliver YOU up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues (notice the “them” and “us” language—a sure sign of persecution going on)
 - c. You will be dragged before governors and rulers for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles, the non-believers (Mt 10:16-18).
 - d. Notice the similarities: the Beatitude says: they will persecute you falsely “on my account;” the Discourse says, they will drag you into their courts “for my sake.”
- IV) “You” is anonymous; thus applicable to any readers/audience of every age.
 - a. Saint Euphemia (+303): “Both the emperor’s commands and those of others in authority must be obeyed if they are not contrary to the God of heaven. If they are, they must not only be disobeyed; they must be resisted” (149).
 - b. Cardinal Jaime Sin of Manila in the years of President Ferdinand Marcos. “I would much rather be a confessor than be a martyr.”
- V) Matthew’s Jesus: when this persecution happens, rejoice and be glad because our reward might not be on earth for living its gospel, but it is assured in heaven.
 - a. And, just as a reminder that we are in good company when this happens, he says: for thus did they do the prophets before you.

- b. Jesus: prophets are rejected if they witness against “way of life” of the world.
 - c. Examine Is 6 for the elements of the prophetic experience/encounter/engagement.
- VI) At end of Beatitudes we find a beginning via a Matthean triad. Examples of triads.
- VII) Individual: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; almsgiving, prayer and fasting; Come, Take, Learn.
- VIII) Dyads of triads, especially in the Sermon on the Mount:
- a. Ask and you’ll receive, seek and you’ll find, knock and it’ll be opened.
 - b. Narrow gate, wide gate; good fruit, bad fruit; house built on rock, house built on sand.
- IX) Structural triads where there is a pattern of threes. This one involves a sharing of authority or a blessing, the receiving of a name and then a commission:
- a. The most famous of these for all Christians is the “Great Commission” at the end of Matthew’s gospel (Mt 18:16-20).
 - b. The most famous of these for many Catholics is Chapter 16:17-19. Here Jesus blesses Simon, bestows on him a name and gives him the commission of the keys to bind and loose.
 - c. So we get the pattern: a blessing, a naming and a commission.
- X) Application to audience today. Establish a reflecting mood before sharing.
- a. Receiving an empowering blessing (recall the two sentences of the 9th Beatitude)
 - b. Given new names: “You are the salt of the earth. . .” “You are the light of the world . . . “
 - c. Given the commission: “So let *your* light so shine before all, that they may see the good that *you* do and give glory to *your* Father who is in heaven.”

XI) For more on themes developed here, see *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, pages 180-194.

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