

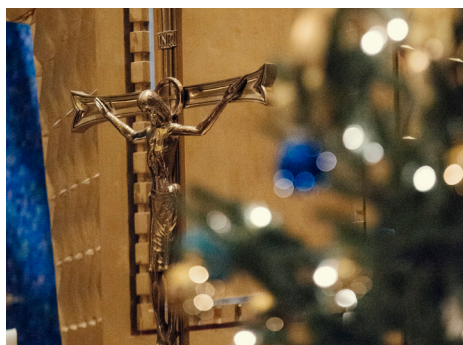


Beatitudes as Gift

Advent is a time for us to prepare our hearts for the celebration of Jesus' birth 2,000 years ago. At the same time, as Christians, we reflect on His enduring presence in our lives that calls us to "live in a manner worthy of the call you have received (Ep. 4:1).

What must one do to be a good Christian? Pope Francis tells us, "the Beatitudes are like a Christian's identity card," they provide a map for the self-giving life to which all are called.

This Advent, take time to reflect on the challenging work of living the Beatitudes. Consider each of the Beatitudes in light of the quote from Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation: "Rejoice and Be Glad," and the gift of self, associated with that Beatitude. How can you offer these gifts to those close to you, and work to reflect this gift of God's love to the world?



Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven

Indeed, once we are rich, we can become so self-satisfied that we leave no room for God's word, for the love of our brothers and sisters, or for the enjoyment of the most important things in life. In this way, we miss out on the greatest treasure of all. *The gift we give is generosity to others.*

Blessed are the Meek, for They Will Inherit the Earth

If we are constantly upset and impatient with others, we will end up drained and weary. But if we regard the faults and limitations of others with tenderness and meekness, without an air of superiority, we can actually help them and stop wast-

ing our energy on useless complaining. *The gift we give is tenderness in frailty.*

Blessed are Those Who Mourn, for They Will Be Comforted

A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life's depths and finding authentic happiness...Such persons are unafraid to share in the suffering of others; they do not flee from painful situations. *The gift we give is compassion that draws near in suffering.*

Blessed are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness, for They Will be Filled

How many people suffer injustice, standing by powerlessly while others divvy up the good things of this life. Some give up fighting for real justice and opt to follow in the train of winners. This has nothing to do with the hunger and thirst for justice that Jesus praises. *The gift we bring is conviction to correct oppression in all its forms.*

Blessed are the Merciful, for They Will Receive Mercy

Mercy has two aspects. It involves giving, helping and serving others, but it also includes forgiveness and understanding... Giving and forgiving means reproducing in our lives some small measure of God's perfection, which gives and forgives super-abundantly. *The gift we give is listening and acting in humility.*

Blessed are the Pure in Heart, for They Will See God

The Bible uses the heart to describe our real intentions, the things we truly seek and desire, apart from all appearances... From the heart's intentions come the desires and the deepest decisions that

determine our actions. *The gift we give is love born of a pure heart.*

Blessed are the Peacemakers, for They Will be Called Children of God

This Beatitude makes us think of the many endless situations of war in our world. Yet we ourselves are often a cause of conflict or at least of misunderstanding. It is not easy to "make" this evangelical peace, which excludes no one but embraces even those who are a bit odd, troublesome or difficult, demanding, different, beaten down by life or simply uninterested. *The gift we give is a willingness to undertake the hard work of crafting links in the great chain of peace.*

Blessed are Those Who are Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven

Jesus himself warns us that the path he proposes goes against the flow, even making us challenge society by the way we live and, as a result, becoming a nuisance. He reminds us how many people have been, and still are, persecuted simply because they struggle for justice, because they take seriously their commitment to God and others. *The gift we give is patient perseverance in striving to bring the Gospel to the world.*

God, who is the giver of all good gifts, gives us His most precious and perfect gift, His son, Jesus.

The beauty in living the Beatitudes is that when we give of our selves we find true happiness, and make present to the world the very best gift of all - Jesus. *That is truly the perfect gift!*