

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage.
God what are you saying to me through this?

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

[1] Thomas Aquinas; Summa Theologica Prima Pars, Q. 26, A.1, Respondeo [2] Modern Catholic Dictionary pg.58
[3] CCC 1719 [4] CCC 1719
[5] Modern Catholic Dictionary pg. 58
[6] 2 Pet 1:4; Jn 17:3 [7] Rom 8:18 [8] CCC— 1721 [9] CCC 1722
[10] Mt 3:13; 4 [11] Mt 4:18
[12] Augustinus, *The Preaching of Augustine: Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, 2 [13] Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.; Basic Course; page 75
[14] Fr. Francis Fernandez; In Conversation with God Vol. 3; 25.2
[15] J. Orlandis, *The Eight Beatitudes* [16] CCC1717
[17] Augustinus, *The Preaching of Augustine: Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, 1 [18] Luke 2:34

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Gospel Reading – Matthew 5:1-12 – Roman Missal

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

Spiritual Reading

From Pope Benedict XVI

The Beatitudes express the meaning of discipleship... What the Beatitudes mean cannot be expressed in purely theoretical terms; it is proclaimed in the life and suffering, and in the mysterious joy, of the disciple who gives himself over completely to following the Lord. The beatitudes demonstrate conclusively how God, in choosing the weak of the world, “shames the strong”. Therefore, with great certainty and conviction we, “the humble of the earth”, from the stance of our utter nothingness “seek the Lord.” For it is due to him that we are in Christ Jesus – through his gaze on the mountain we become like him.

Beatitude: The desire for happiness – Lesson and Discussion

What is Beatitude?

The word beatitude comes from Latin *beatitudo*, which means a state of being happy or blessed. Beatitude means the perfect good of an intellectual nature since happiness is the final end of intellectual beings. God is the most perfect good and He possesses the fullness of intelligence, thus, beatitude is most properly applied to Him.[1] A supernatural beatitude is the perfect happiness enjoyed by a nature raised by grace and the light of glory to the eternal vision of God.[2]

What do the Beatitudes do?

The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence.[3] We seek happi-

ness here on this earth, and when we seek this happiness we are truly seeking God who is happiness. God calls each of us individually to his own beatitude (or happiness). He also calls the Church as a whole, the new people made up of those who have accepted the promise and live from it in truth.[4] In naming those people who are truly happy and blessed, Jesus means to reveal our mistaken view of what we think is necessary for happiness. It is not blessed are those who are rich in gold, or great in power, dignity, and fame. Rather, it is quite the opposite types of people that Jesus names as happy.

How can the Beatitudes make us happy?

The Beatitudes told by Jesus Christ promise us all happiness if we order our lives according to the dispositions that are present in the beatitudes. By following the Beatitudes we are following Christ's divine example.[5] By following his ways we are following in the ways of perfection, which will lead us to ultimate happiness or pure joy.

God has put us on this earth to know, love, and serve him. Since, as we saw earlier, beatitude belongs most properly to God, the more we strive to reach true beatitude we are actually striving towards God. By living out the Beatitudes we come to know God by contemplating on that which He names as happy, we love God more as we make the conscious choice to love others more, and we serve God by surrendering our lives to Him. Beatitude makes us "partakers of the divine nature" and of eternal life.[6] With beatitude, man enters into the glory of Christ[7] and into the joy of the Trinitarian life.[8]

The Beatitudes are too hard to follow.

The beatitudes surpass the understanding and intellectual powers of man. They come directly from the Word of God made flesh. The beatitudes are a gift from Him, and are completely given to us by his own charity.[9] When we consciously choose to follow the beatitudes we are given an abundance of grace. Including the grace of perseverance to follow the beatitudes even when they are difficult to follow.

When did Jesus preach about the Beatitudes?

After the baptism and temptation of Christ,[10] he calls his apostles and disciples,[11] and begins his whole ministry by teaching the Beatitudes first. The beatitudes are the New Law that Jesus teaches during the Sermon on the Mount. The mountain where the Sermon on the Mount occurs signifies "the greater precepts of righteousness" compared to the lesser ones given to the Jews.[12] The mountain imagery recalls Mt. Sinai where God gave the Law to Moses; these precepts were lesser to the extent that they were commands that were only partially lived out. Jesus reassures the audience in Matthew 5:17 that he has not come to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them. "They may be called the eight commandments of the New Law where each commandment carries the promise of a distinctive form of happiness. To be stressed is the fact that all the faithful, no matter what their state in life, are to practice the Beatitudes." [13]

It is also interesting to note that Moses receives the Ten Commandments from God on Mt. Sinai and then comes down to present them to the Jews. On the other hand, Jesus goes up on the mountain and brings his disciples and followers up the mountain with him to teach them. The significance here is that the mediator between God and man is no longer simply a man (Moses) but now one who is true God and true man. The Beatitudes are the first words that Jesus chooses to preach at this, his first public ministry in Matthew.

Is Jesus saying we should seek out suffering and pain?

No. We do not need to go and seek out pain, persecution, or suffering. Those things will find us all at some point in our lives. It doesn't displease God by trying to find ways of overcoming pain, poverty, or injustice either; however the Beatitudes teach us that the real success of our lives is to love and fulfill God's Will for us.[14] The Beatitudes are an invitation to an upright and worthy life.[15] The Beatitudes speak about having the proper interior disposition in every aspect of our lives and about acting in certain ways.

Why did he start his preaching with the Beatitudes?

The Beatitudes are the foundation of which we need to live and follow Christ. They are the realization of hope for which his followers had been longing. "The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity...they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life." [16] Jesus presents the Beatitudes as rewards for a life of proper actions and dispositions. Augustine argues that within the Sermon on the Mount one finds "the perfect measure of the Christian life." [17] This comes from Jesus' tri-partite explanation of what a disciple is, how they should act, and the reward that will come from these actions. If a man can follow these precepts of Jesus, he will be a perfect example of a true Christian. He bases this on the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 7:24-27 where Jesus describes the two foundations upon which a man can build his house, rock or sand. The man who shapes his life according to the words Jesus spoke on the mountain is like the man who built his house on rock, he has accomplished God's Will in his life and has an unshakeable foundation. On the other hand, the man who builds his house on sand, disregarding Jesus' words, is a fool whose house is doomed to fall.

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, Turin, Italy (1901-1925)

Blessed Pier Giorgio has been called the "Man of the Beatitudes." The Beatitudes are an outline of the Christian life. It is the faith and life that we must defend. The Beatitudes call us to renounce self and live for Christ. At the presentation of Our Lord in the temple, Simeon said that Jesus would be a "sign that is spoken against." [18] The Beatitudes, like Christ, are a sign of contradiction to our world. In fact, they are sometimes the direct opposite of what we see lived out and pursued. Blessed Pier Giorgio said, "To live without faith, without a patrimony to defend, without a steady struggle for truth, that is not living, but existing." By living out the Beatitudes, we are defending our faith and struggling for truth against what is the norm. We are truly living, not just existing and going with the flow.