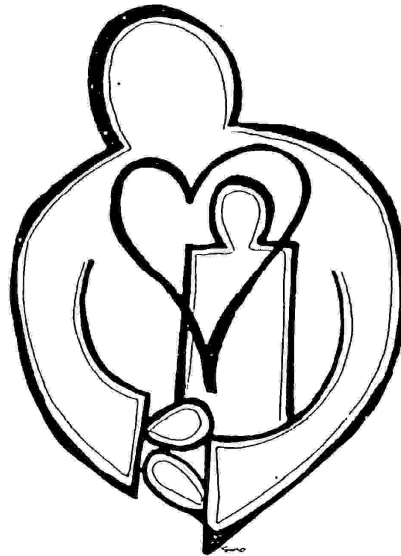


The Beatitudes: A Spirituality of Service & Justice

**A Parish Day of Recollection
March 2007**



Catholic Diocese of Richmond

**Office of Justice & Peace
811 Cathedral Place
Richmond, VA 23220
(804) 359-5661**

**Appalachian Office of Justice & Peace
P.O. Box 660
St. Paul, VA 24283
(276) 762-5050**

Explanation of Retreat & Its Purpose

- Audience: Anyone in justice and peace (or just interested in the theme)
- Attitude: Go up to the mountain top and sit down at the feet of Jesus
- Companions: Find a commonality among different groups; people engaged in justice work, and those who would like to be engaged in the work of justice.
- Purpose: We all are called to live the great commandment of love of God and love of neighbor. [Matthew 12] The challenge we face as believers is how to do this? How do we love God and neighbor as we love ourselves? How do we do this in a sustained manner? Or, as we find in Micah 6:8, how do we “act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God?”

How did Jesus do this? He prayed. Jesus prayed in public and in private. The Gospels are filled with examples of the pattern of Jesus’ life in which he spent extended periods of time for prayer to the father, Abba.

Prayer is also the basis for our life as Christians. Prayer is the fundamental way in which we experience the Risen Lord:

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18]

The Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke provide the framework for this retreat experience. There is a rich tradition among Christian believers of the solace and substance offered in pondering these Scripture texts.

The Beatitudes are illustrative of what happens in the lives of ones who take Christ’s call to love God and neighbor seriously: *The Kingdom of Heaven is theirs, they shall be comforted, they shall inherit the earth, they shall be satisfied, they shall obtain mercy, they shall see God, they shall be called children of God, and they shall be persecuted.* [Matthew 5:3-10]

God is with us, but we can never know it unless we take the time to know God in prayer. A vision of loving God in loving one’s neighbor is the basis of our call “to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.” [Micah 6:8]

Micah’s vision is a contemplative one. It assumes a relationship; it requires a relationship between God and us. That is the invitation of this day of prayer. Taking time for a day or an afternoon for retreat is a necessity not an option. Time is the gift we give back to God so that God may be with us in a renewed awareness of the spirit in our hearts, in our beings, in our world.

Parish social ministers, justice and peace volunteers, and all baptized members of the Christian community each can benefit from coming together to consider the richness of the spirituality of the Beatitudes.

Environment & Supplies

It is a good idea, if at all possible, to create a prayerful and reflective environment in the room being used for this retreat. You may also want to create a visual focal point with candles and a Bible on a small table. The icon cards of the saints (see info below) should be placed on another table in the room where participants can easily see them.

Retreat participants can be seated in groups at tables or in a large circle. If possible, mix people up so that they are not sitting with those whom they know well.

Handouts:

- Two versions of the Beatitudes from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke
- Doris Donnelly's examination of conscience (for general introduction to Beatitudes)
- Table sharing sheets (3)
- Closing prayer service
- Evaluation

Other materials:

- Saints cards
 - Trinity Stores offers a wonderful set of 91 note cards – the **Saints, Martyrs, & Holy People Collection by Br. Robert Lentz**. It includes familiar saints like Francis of Assisi, Ignatius Loyola, and Julian of Norwich. It also includes contemporary holy people like Dorothy Day, Caesar Chavez, Oscar Romero, and Martin Luther King. Total price is \$92 plus shipping & handling. To order, call (800) 699-4482 or visit: <http://www.trinitystores.com/main.php4?collection=34>
 - Bridge Building Icons has a **Mega Note Card Assortment** by various artists [item code # NCMIX3]. These 130 cards are on durable card stock and most measure 4-1/2" x 6" folded. An envelope is included for each card. Total price is \$65 plus shipping & handling. To order, call (800) 325-6263 or visit <http://www.bridgebuilding.com/catalog/specials.html>.
 - One set of each of these two collections is available to borrow from the Office of Justice & Peace. Contact Martha Mainous at (804) 622-5127 or mmainous@richmonddiocese.org.
- Beatitudes posters
 - The Office of Justice and Peace has a set of **Beatitudes posters from Maryknoll** using pictures from around the world. You can borrow them from OJP by contacting Martha Mainous at (804) 622-5127 or mmainous@richmonddiocese.org.

Equipment:

- CD player
- For the general introduction to the Beatitudes, you will need a laptop and projector if you use the suggested PowerPoint presentation. You can download the file from the Internet at: http://www.e-water.net/beatitudes_en.html. Or you can elect to do a verbal presentation.

Music:

- Either have the CD of "Blest are They" by David Haas available or someone who can lead the singing or play the song. The music is available in **Gather** or most GIA or OCP hymnals. For groups in the Diocese of Richmond, you can obtain the music and lyrics under the diocesan license by contacting Catherine Combier-Donovan in the office of Worship at (804) 622-5235 or by e-mail at CCombierDonovan@richmonddiocese.org.
- Reflection music for general introduction

The Beatitudes: A Spirituality of Service and Justice
Retreat Outline

Six Hour Format

- 8:45 Advertised start, refreshments available; registration
- 9:15 Welcome; introduce facilitators; introduction
- 9:25 Icebreaker if needed; otherwise, just introductions at the table if not done already
- 9:40 General introduction to the Beatitudes
- Short talk
 - Silent reflection time
 - Table sharing [if there is enough time]
 - Brief closing remarks
- 10:00 Blessed are the poor in Spirit
- Short talk
 - Silent reflection time
 - Table sharing [maybe followed by some large group sharing]
- 11:00 Short break
- 11:15 Blessed are the meek
- Short talk
 - Silent reflection time
 - Table sharing [maybe followed by some large group sharing]
- 12:15 Lunch
- 1:00 Witness
- Short talk on witness
 - Silent reflection time
[In this time, people will be instructed to find a picture/icon of their witness and to reflect on the beatitude they see reflected in the life of this person.]
 - Table sharing
- 2:00 Debrief the day
- 2:30 Fill out evaluation forms
- 2:45 Final prayer
- 3:00 Dismissal

The Beatitudes: A Spirituality of Service and Justice
Retreat Outline

Five hour format

10:00 Advertised start, refreshments available; registration

10:15 Welcome; introduce facilitators; introductions at tables

10:25 General introduction to the Beatitudes

- Short talk
- Silent reflection time
- Table sharing [if there is enough time]
- Brief closing remarks

10:40 Blessed are the poor in Spirit

- Short talk
- Reflection Time
- Table sharing [maybe followed by some large group sharing]

11:15 Short Break

11:30 Blessed are the meek

- Short talk
- Reflection Time
- Table sharing [maybe followed by some large group sharing]

12:15 Lunch

1:00 Witness

- Short talk on witness
- Silent reflection time
[In this time, people will be instructed to find a picture/icon of their witness and to reflect on the beatitude they see reflected in the life of this person.]
- Table sharing

2:00 Debrief the day

2:30 Fill out evaluation forms

2:45 Final prayer

3:00 Dismissal

Two Versions of the Beatitudes in Scripture

Matthew 5: 1-12

When he 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. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Luke 6: 20-26

And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.

Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.

Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

But woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep.

Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.

Retreat Introduction Talk

General Introduction to the Beatitudes

So, how many of you can name the eight beatitudes? The Beatitudes from Matthew are a standing favorite from among the Scriptures. I was surprised when I was doing some web-searching on the Beatitudes that I actually found two slide shows on the Beatitudes. Since both presented similar images I went with the one with the background music of Bach's Canon. So, please sit back and take this in.

PowerPoint Slide Show [2 minutes]

http://www.e-water.net/beatitudes_en.html

It's all so soothing isn't it? And when I got finished, I asked myself: What's wrong with this picture? The scripture scholar, Andrej Kodjak, believes that the opening of the Sermon on the Mount was meant to shock the audience, but the shock value has been lost owing to the commonness of the text.

I think that if the message of Jesus in this text as in so many other texts were adapted into music, it wouldn't be the soothing chords of Bach's Canon that we would be listening to, but something jarring, something that shakes us up, that makes us want to put our hands over our ears and say "This is just too much." It would be less the Canon and more hip hop or punk rock.

We can recapture some of the shock when we look at the somewhat parallel text from Luke, called the sermon on the plain:

And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.

Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.

Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

But woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep.

Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.

Luke's blessings and woes are a lot less ambiguous. It is harder to tame or to domesticate. It brings consolation, but also confrontation.

One time when I heard Edwina Gately speak, she said, "When you see a Biblical woe coming, duck."

Is it any wonder that we retreat to the apparent safety of the text from Matthew, the text where the woes are implied rather than stated? In Luke's text, the blessings and the "woes" are more striking. What belongs to the Reign of God and what does not is apparent.

And what are the shocking images we have here? Well, for one, this is a world turned upside down.

In our world, we look around at who society says the blessed, the happy are those with power, with prestige, with status, with money, with an entourage, the people who have people. And in Jesus' world, nothing could be more different where people who are not normally considered blessed or happy are the poor, the meek, those who mourn, the merciful, the clean of heart, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Like so many sayings of Jesus, the world is turned upside down.

Secondly, these images are shocking because they present a view, not just of individuals who are blessed, but what the Reign of God looks like.

The Reign of God is not about power or domination, something which our world knows a great deal about, but about meekness, gentleness, sorrow, even persecution. While our tendency is to take what we see as good in our world and extrapolate that into a picture of a perfect world, or a utopia, these sayings of Jesus says that the Reign of God is very different.

So, let's enter into the spirit of the beatitudes for just a few moments and let the Word of God shock, annoy, push and prod us to move ourselves toward the peaceable reign of God.

Distribute reflection sheets -- **Examination of Conscience by Doris Donnelly** -- and play reflective music while the participants read the examination of conscience.

If there is enough time, ask the people to share at table:

What new insights have you gained into the Beatitudes through these questions?

What questions did you find especially challenging?

So, today we are going to explore the Beatitudes. For most of our day we are going to be looking at two beatitudes: Blessed are the poor in spirit and Blessed are the meek, but the other beatitudes, from either Gospel will be up for grabs later in the day. Blessed are we who are gathered together in God's name to explore our blessings and the challenges those blessings bring. I would like to conclude this introduction with a prayer from the late Dom Helder Camera, archbishop of Brazil.

Come, Lord
Do not smile and say
You are already with us.
Millions do not know you
And to us who do,
What is the difference?
What is the point of your presence
If our lives do not alter?
Change our lives,
Shatter our complacency.
Make your word

Flesh of our flesh,
Blood of our blood
And our life's purpose.
Take away the quietness
Of a clear conscience.
Press us uncomfortably.
For only thus is
The other peace made,
Your peace.

Amen.

“Blessed are the Poor in Spirit” Suggested Talk

The Beatitudes can give us an opportunity to “turn things upside down” and look at things in a different way.

I invite you to take advantage of this opportunity as we explore prayer using the Beatitude “Blessed are the Poor in Spirit.”

For me, prayer is about relationship with God and has several interrelated components.

The activity of prayer first, is about my intimate and personal relationship with God. But even though this is an internal communication with God it is not done in a vacuum. It is shaped by my interactions in the world and how I encounter God in the world.

Second, the activity of prayer is how I reflect my internal relationship with God back into the world through my actions. So there is an internal transformative component that is shaped by my encounter of God in the world and then there is an external component of how I, as a result of inner conversion, act in the world. Both of these activities shape my relationship with God.

The poor can and should be a huge part of our prayer lives. To be in relationship with God necessarily means to be in relationship with the poor. We see over and over again in scripture that God is present and concerned with the poor. It is among the poor that we can find God, have the opportunity for conversion and then the capacity in turn to act for transformation in the world.

Being in relationship with God through the poor can lead to inner change which in turn leads to outer actions. Rev. Mel Williams from Watts Street Baptist Church said in a sermon given Feb. 15, 2004:

“We need the poor for what we will receive – the blessing and benefit of doing what is right, what is moral, what is God’s will. Caring for the poor is at the heart of our relationship with God...part of our very salvation.”

Now back to “blessed are the poor in spirit” and the turning of things upside down. When we turn our familiar western cultural orientation upside down, we, who are used to being in control; knowing how things should be; knowing how to get things done; and how to teach others how to do things are challenged to allow the poor, the little ones, the poor in spirit to teach us about an internal posture and relationship with God.

To do this, to allow ourselves to be taught about real relationship with God, we need to be in relationship with the poor and accept the gift they have to offer us.

For each of us, our relationship with the poor will be different. For some of us it may be relationship with people who are homeless. For others it will be working with women who are victims of domestic violence, struggling with decisions about abortion and adoption, or single mothers

working full time, going to school and raising children. And still for others, our relationships to those who are impoverished will be with immigrants and refugees from other countries.

For me, it recently has been the people of Haiti. In my experience the poor are in a natural position to be open to God and open to the real need for God in their lives. The people of Haiti have taught me that I, as a person of wealth can get very confused about God and my posture and relationship with God.

I have money and things, and savings accounts, and health care and a support system of family and friends who have means in case I need help. I use these things to give myself security and to put up a fortress around me to make sure nothing bad happens to me. It gives me a false sense of security that I am in charge and in control.

I can get very confused about who really is in charge and who my security really is. Me, my things and money replace God and leaves me in a place that I don't rely on God.

In my experience of many people who are impoverished I find they do not get confused. They do not have all the "things" we who are wealthy have to secure ourselves and our lives. They know who their security is; they rely on God and have right and real relationship with God.

I would like to share two quick stories:

1. My son (my natural tendency of trying to control and be in charge and find out I am not)
2. Haiti the truck tipping over (people of Haiti place their trust and security in God)

Over the last two years I have learned that God is in control I am not and in this process I have learned who God is to me and that God's vision for my life may be much different and much better than I could ever imagine or create myself. God knows much more than I know.

I have learned that I am only an instrument to do God's work. If I am in control and in charge and "know what is going to happen or supposed to happen" I can miss God's vision of what should happen. And God's vision is a vision much more beautiful and joy filled than I could ever dream up.

I have learned that I need to be open and empty to allow God to get God's work done through me. I have learned that I can not get in the way.

This has changed my prayer life. Now I can only pray that I be empty enough to allow God's transformative power to change me so that I can in turn act in the world with God's people doing God's will not my will. And again, since God is concerned with the poor my actions must reflect care and concern for the poor and action with and on behalf of the poor.

My final learning then in all of this is that Prayer is not an isolated event but intimately connected to the poor and how I live my life. If I am truly open and empty to allow God to fill me, direct me and my interactions with others, the world will change. Not because of anything I do except being empty and open for God and willing to act on this in the world.

I would like to give you time to reflect on what it means for you to be poor in spirit, your relationship with God, your prayer life and how that translates into your life.

Macrina Wiederkehr helps us delve into this process of turning things upside down and challenging ourselves to look at our relationship with God through the lens of the poor in spirit in her book “Seasons of your Heart”

She writes:

“I turned to the empty ones,
what does it mean to be poor in spirit? I
asked
is there anything good about being that
poor?”

The poor in spirit replied:
Can God fill anyone who is full?
and how sad if you should suddenly
discover
that you are full of illusions
instead of filled with truth.

Being poor in spirit means
having nothing to call your own
except your poverty
it is a joyful awareness of your
emptiness
it is the soil of opportunity
for God has space to work
in emptiness that is owned.

Being poor in spirit means
knowing that you are so small
and dependent

needy and powerless
that you live with open hands
and an open heart
waiting to be blessed.
For only then can you be blessed
if you know
that you need blessing.

Being poor in spirit
means that you have time
you are not oppressed by deadlines
there is always time for waiting
for the one who is poor.
Being poor in this way
frees you from the prison
of having to have everything
planned and structured
as though there were no tomorrow.

And finally, being poor in spirit
means being able to say
without embarrassment
humbly, and yet with passion:
“I need you.”

Distribute hand-out with questions for silent reflection and for table sharing .

“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”
Suggested Talk

INTRODUCTION:

The focus for session is the Beatitude from Matthew, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the land.”

I want to look at this Beatitude in three parts:

1. Reflecting on the Scripture itself;
2. Reflecting on the deepest reality of Eucharist; and
3. Connecting these to the truths we are learning about our oneness with the earth.

PART ONE: Reflecting on Scripture

“We are using the practice of ‘*lectio divina*’ or sacred reading of scripture. It is what Jews and Christians do as our main theological activity – everything flows from that sacred source of what we call revelation. We read meaning out of the scriptures and we read meaning into the scriptures. And in a real sense it was through a process of *lectio divina* that the gospels came to be born. The early poets and evangelical theologians of the Christian movement tried to read the Jesus story out of the first testament of the Hebrew scriptures – the Torah and the Prophets – and also out of the text of their history and their experience and they endeavored to elaborate the Jesus story as the fulfillment, the climax, the surprise of the whole covenant tradition that began at creation, was deepened with Abraham and Sarah, made explicit as a way of life with Moses, reinterpreted and renewed by the Prophets and then finally embodied in Jesus in a mystical way, and interior way, a dynamically new way.”

- KP Deignan, **Spirituality After 9/11**

Matthew Chapter 5: 1-6

*When he 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 the meek for they shall inherit the land. This Beatitude is only in Matthew’s version.

Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the Land. “Land” here means Kingdom or Kindom as opposed to Palestine.

“Blessed” means “happy,” “satisfied” Psalm 1:1.

Blessed is found in Proverbs 3/13: “Happy are those who find wisdom.” This is a characteristic formula in wisdom rhetoric (Proverbs: 8.34; 20.7; 28.14; 29.18; 31.28)

“*Meek*” - aware of one’s proper position in the Kindom; not inconsequential or overweening. Psalm 37 “but the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.”

From a legal perspective: the operative word is “inherit.” This is a property right by testament assuming legitimacy and kinship to the previous owner. This is not ownership unsecured, gotten by default. Rather this is rightful ownership at some later point, when the event that effects the right occurs.

This right of inheritance also has the implication that there is a duty here to make sure that the inheritance is not wasted. It is because we know we will inherit the Kindom, that we are aware of our standing, our “proper position,” our Meekness. This is a binding agreement. They “Shall” inherit.

We -- as studiers, prayers of the word, celebrators, and seekers of the Christ -- exercise our legitimate rights by doing what this beatitude demands. We act as ones who are inheritors.

This probably is a good beatitude for doers of justice. Be meek, “assert ourselves with awareness of our inheritance and our relationship to the one from whom we inherit,” and practice the duties and diligence along with those others who will inherit with us.

Getting an inheritance implies that there is an event that confers this inheritance, effects this ownership. It is the coming of the Kindom.

Salvation has come is not yet, so in some measure the actual inheritance, the ownership of the land (the earth) is already true. We can then, in this world view, already exercise our responsibilities as an owner. We can do this now. We pray it every day. Thy Kindom come on earth as it is in heaven.

PART TWO: Reflecting on the deepest reality of Eucharist, the Eucharistic Mystery - The Sacramental Church [People of God] -

Church is the sacrament of our encounter with God.

“If the Church is [People of God], in Christ, a kind of Sacrament, she is a sign and instrument of not only intimate union with God but also the unity of the whole human race.”

- Vatican II, **Lumen Gentium** [# 1]

Our worship holds Word and Witness in a holy tension. With “Word” alone we are evangelical. With “witness” alone we are activists.

But the sacramental component -- the fact that there is an efficacy about all we do -- allows this work of justice and peace to have its transformative place in the mandate of the believer and the spiritual life.

Worship is the context in which we do the sacramental work of healing, reconciliation, restoration, and repair. We become what we celebrate. It is here available and efficacious.

We are who we say we are, Christ in us, among us, with us. This truth celebrated in worship is what roots us, feeds us nourishes us in living the Beatitudes.

“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”

“Meek,” as stance, *meek* as full stature in the body of Christ. We are baptized into Christ, buried with Christ, one with Christ in the Kingdom of God. That is why we are here, why there is a people of God, why we are Church.

“Meek” speaks the truth of our Baptismal plan. “Meek” speaks the Gospel we have heard all of our lives. “Meek” is also the Church’s best kept secret. And most of all “Meek” is Good News for the Poor

When we speak of the Church as the sacrament of encounter with God, when we speak of the Eucharistic Mystery, we are really saying that:

“A Christian is a mystic – that is to say one in whom the sacred mysteries live, are embodied. We are not a law tradition, or a moral formation tradition, but essentially a mystery cult – a transformation of consciousness and perception tradition. The Christian mystery is a multifaceted diamond of myriad mysteries –remember the invitation made to us at each Eucharist: in order to celebrate these sacred mysteries let us examine our consciousness in their regard: joyful, sorrowful, glorious, transformative. We find most of the mysteries encoded in the gospels. Our pondering and *celebrating these mysteries is a way of metabolizing* their energy into ourselves. Pondering, turning over in our hearts a text of scripture makes it the very lens through which we see the Christian life – indeed all of life itself. And we also make the mysteries part of us in the performative practice of sacramental ritual.”

- KP Deignan, **Spirituality After 9/11**

Pope John Paul II defined all this as a “***Eucharistic attitude***” [be attitude] which ought to spur Christians to bear witness more forcefully to God’s presence in the world, to not be afraid to speak about God and proudly to bear the signs of our faith in witness and dialogue with all.

He writes:

The Eucharist has always empowered the choices and the ethical and moral behaviour of believers, effecting philosophy, art, literature and even civil and legal institutions, thereby contributing to fashioning the features of an entire civilization, in personal and family life as well as in cultural, political and social life. The Eucharist moves Christians to a commitment for justice in the today’s world: “The Eucharist not only provides the interior strength needed for this mission, but is also —in some sense—its plan. For the Eucharist is a mode of being, which passes from Jesus into each Christian, through whose testimony it is meant to spread throughout society and culture.... Incarnating the Eucharistic ‘plan’ in daily life, wherever people live and work—in families, schools, the workplace, in all of life’s settings—means bearing witness that *human reality cannot be justified without reference to the Creator*: ‘Without the Creator the creature would disappear’.”

- 40th anniversary of document on the liturgy: Synod of Bishops XI Ordinary General Assembly: **The Eucharist: Source And Summit of The Life and Mission of The Church**

This is the consciousness that we have to bring to our ritual to move us forward.

These are dense mysteries, but somehow we must move through this denseness with the awareness of our Beatitude inheritance:

When we say, pray KYRIE we are asking mercy on our world, our history our structures for its sins and its terrors.

When we proclaim LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKE AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD, we are taking away the sin of the world for these days, this day.

When we pray COME HOLY SPIRIT UPON THESE GIFTS, she is and we are the reality through which these changes can/do happen.

It is our faith that calls forth this mystery.

PART THREE: Connecting these to the truths we are learning about our oneness with the earth.

In our time, there are voices that recognize the deep *connection between the centrality of creation and the centrality of the mystery of the Eucharist. Who are the voices of the Meek who know they shall inherit the earth? Let's look. Formal voices, old voices, new voices, unexpected voices:*

[Have each table or group of participants select one of the voices, take some quiet time to consider its view, and then have a table sharing on how these voices inform part one and two of this presentation of Blessed are the Meek, they shall inherit the earth.]

Conclusion: This is our right. Our inheritance. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

Presentation:

Jaculyn Hanrahan, CND

AOJP

Revised March 20, 2007

Cloud of Witnesses Suggested Talk

We have a cloud of witnesses to enrich and affirm our spiritual journey if we but take the time to discipline ourselves to tap into their precious, imperfect and human stories.

Beatitudes people are the ones who give us perspective on our lives and on the world. They give a perspective we are blind to, resistant to or afraid of. This happens not because of the kinds of things they do but because of the kind of people they are and the kinds of people they know.

Beatitudes people leave us with a sense of God's blessing-both the comfort and the sting. And like salt they have been seasoned by suffering, or lightened by standing with those who have suffered. Beatitudes people keep us honest and show us who we can be.

In their presence we are on holy ground (awkward, unsure, of ourselves no longer quite so self confident). They give us hope and they promise struggle. They show us how to reach into the lives of the people and out to the places that frighten us.

Beatitudes people tell the truth that we are not ready to hear, and they show us how to listen. Our world would be so much smaller, colder, darker and barren without them.

Some of the Beatitudes people of the 20th century were Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Archbishop Oscar Romero, and Catholic Worker Dorothy Day. Imagine the 20th century without any one of them!

Jesus used three organic Gospel metaphors: salt, leaven and light. These symbols help us to connect into three categories of Beatitudes people who change our world.

Let's look at the symbol of **salt**. What people -- traditional or contemporary -- are the ones that season your life and or sting you with truth, and have shown you how to struggle with dignity?

Now let's think about **leaven**. Who are the people that raise the standard of loving in your life, in your neighborhood, in your community? Who are the ones that contaminate you with love and challenge? Who are the people that are not so good for your reputation?

Finally, let's think about **light**. Who are the people who lighten your life by the way they carry life's burdens with grace? Who are the ones who shine a light into overlooked corners and spotlight neglected people? Who are the people who live lightly and humbly chose to the earth?

Take a look at the icon cards, papers and books for a few minutes. Find one that interests or attracts you. Then sit with it and ask why this person is resonating in your heart as someone you know or would like to know?

After a few minutes turn to the people at your table, share your witness, and explain why they attract and/or challenge you.

Remember that the cloud of witnesses are with at all times in all places. They can be a rich resource of hope to help us live the challenge of the Beatitudes. They help us to connect with our God. They are imperfect people like us with wonderful stories.

There is the Jewish tradition of 36 righteous ones whose role in life is to justify the purpose of humanity in the eyes of God. Their identity is unknown to each other, even to themselves.

These Tzaddikim are also called the Nistarim (“concealed ones”). In Jewish folk tales, they emerge from their self-imposed concealment and, by the mystic powers, they succeed in averting the threatened disasters of a people persecuted by the enemies that surround them. They return to their anonymity as soon as their task is accomplished.

The Tzaddikim do not themselves know that they are one of the 36. In fact, tradition has it that should a person claim to be one of the 36, that is proof positive that he is certainly not one. The 36 are simply too humble to believe that they are one of the 36.

Be like one of the 36 Tzaddikim, be one of the Beatitude people -- salty, fiery, heaven-raisers.

Closing Prayer

Call to praise: Come and fill our hearts with your peace. You alone, O Lord, are holy!
Come and fill our hearts with your peace, Alleluia!

Leader: God of Life, we have arrived at this moment of sacred time, and as are all your moments, it is a moment of grace, truth and decision.

All: We recognize your precious gift of time for conversion and hope and healing.

Leader: May we embrace this moment with gratitude leaving behind the darkness of evil where self-interest, domination and injustice prevail.

All: Grace us with your light.

Reader: A reading from Micah 4:6-8:

On the day of my justice and peace,
I will gather every human heart.
I will gather up the lame and all the sick.
I will gather in the outcasts and the oppressed.
I will take away affliction and sorrow.
I will wipe away every tear and bitterness.
I will make lame ones dance.
I will make a strong nation of those who are weak.
I will open my arms in friendship to those who have suffered and despaired.
I will be the Shepherd-Ruler whose love flows from Mt. Zion.
And you, city of Jerusalem, capital of my faithful people,
You are the eldest of my children, Zion.
Your dishonor shall be blotted out and taken away.
Your suffering and loneliness shall come to an end.
To you, I will bring the delight of my justice.
My peace shall embrace you as friend, long lost; now found.

Leader: One of the first stages in healing is the acknowledgement of sin in our lives and in our world. I would ask that you take a few moments of silence to think about what Luke framed as a “woe.” Please take some time to think about our sinfulness individually and as a world and frame with these words: “Woe to us...” (e.g. Woe to us if we forget the cries of the poor in our world.)

Lamentations

After all these lamentations have been offered, we pray together: **For this we are truly sorry.**

Affirmations

Leader: To lament this sinfulness is not the whole story, though. God does not allow us to wallow in our sin. God invites us to the fullness of life. Like Jesus, we present for blessing the signs of hope, the signs of God's reign in our midst. Please take a few moments of silence to formulate a blessing and frame it with these words: "Blessed are we..." (e.g. Blessed are we when we work for peace.)

At the conclusion of all our blessings, we pray:
For these signs of hope, we give you thanks and praise!

Leader: **Let us pray:**

Side I: Make us, O Lord, a church that will be more courageous than cautious;

Side II: That we will not merely comfort the afflicted, but afflict the comfortable;

Side I: That we will not only love the world, but demand justice;

Side II: That we will not remain silent when people are calling for a voice;

Side I: That we will not pass by on the other side when wounded humanity is waiting to be healed;

Side II: That we will not only be called to worship, but also sent out to witness;

Side I: That we will follow Christ even when the way points to a Cross.

Side II: Give us the confidence as Church to challenge injustice
And to nurture the flame of justice until it burns brightly.

All: Accompany us, Spirit of justice and community and light our way.
Move us, Spirit, heal us, guide us and challenge us,
Call us to action and to prayer.
May your passion for justice burn through us and in us, and warm the hearts of those around us, encouraging hope and overcoming fear.
To this end, we offer ourselves in the name of him who loved us and gave himself for us.
Blessed be God forever. Amen

Closing Song: "Blessed are They" by David Haas

Blest are they, the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of God.
Blest are they full of sorrow; they shall be consoled.

Refrain: Rejoice and be glad. Blessed are you. Holy are you.
Rejoice and be glad. Yours is the kingdom of God.

Blest are they, the lowly ones. They shall inherit the earth.
Blest are they who hunger and thirst. They shall have their fill.

Refrain: Rejoice and be glad. Blessed are you. Holy are you.
Rejoice and be glad. Yours is the kingdom of God.

Blest are they who show mercy. Mercy shall be theirs.
Blest are they the pure of heart. They shall see God.

Refrain: Rejoice and be glad. Blessed are you. Holy are you.
Rejoice and be glad. Yours is the kingdom of God.

Blest are they who seek peace; they are the children of God.
Blest are they who suffer in faith, the glory of God is theirs.

Refrain: Rejoice and be glad. Blessed are you. Holy are you.
Rejoice and be glad. Yours is the kingdom of God.

Blest are you who suffer hate all because of me.
Rejoice and be glad yours in the kingdom. Shine for all to see!

Refrain: Rejoice and be glad. Blessed are you. Holy are you.
Rejoice and be glad. Yours is the kingdom of God.

Text: Matthew 5:3-12; Tune: David Haas, © 1985 GIA Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.
Reprinted under OneLicense.net #A-713185.

The Beatitudes and the Spirituality of Justice Evaluation

Your feedback will help us improve this experience for other people. We appreciate your comments:

Please rate with five (5) being highest and one (1) lowest

1. Overall flow of the program:

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

2. enough quiet time for reflection

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

3. enough time for discussion

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

4. clear connection between the Beatitudes and Justice

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

5. Program was thought-provoking and/or inspirational

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

Evaluation continues on the other side

Please rate each section with five (5) being highest and one (1) lowest.

General Introduction

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

The Poor in Spirit

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

The Meek will inherit the Earth

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

Cloud of Witnesses

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

Closing Prayer

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

Any other comments to help us improve this program?