

On the Beatitudes

Q. 708. Which are the Beatitudes?

A. The Beatitudes are:

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.
3. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.
4. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.
5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
6. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.
8. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Q. 709. What are the Beatitudes and why are they so called?

A. The Beatitudes are a portion of Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and they are so called because each of them holds out a promised reward to those who practice the virtues they recommend.

Q. 710. Where did Our Lord usually preach?

A. Our Lord usually preached wherever an opportunity of doing good by His Words presented itself. He preached at times in the synagogues or meeting-houses but more frequently in the open air—by the seashore or on the mountain, and often by the wayside.

Q. 711. What is the meaning and use of the Beatitudes in general?

A.

1. In general the Beatitudes embrace whatever pertains to the perfection of Christian life, and they invite us to the practice of the highest Christian virtues;
2. In different forms they all promise the same reward, namely, sanctifying grace in this life and eternal glory in the next;
3. They offer us encouragement and consolation for every trial and affliction.

Q. 712. What does the first Beatitude mean by the "poor in spirit"?

A. The first Beatitude means by the "poor in spirit" all persons, rich or poor, who would not offend God to possess or retain anything that this world can give; and who, when necessity or charity requires it, give willingly for the glory of God. It includes also those who humbly submit to their condition in life when it cannot be improved by lawful means.

Q. 713. Who are the mourners who deserve the consolation promised in the third Beatitude?

A. The mourners who deserve the consolation promised in the third Beatitude are they who, out of love for God, bewail their own sins and those of the world; and they who patiently endure all trials that come from God or for His sake.

Q. 714. What lessons do the other Beatitudes convey?

A. The other Beatitudes convey these lessons: The meek suppress all feelings of anger and humbly submit to whatever befalls them by the Will of God; and they never desire to do evil for evil. The justice after which we should seek is every Christian virtue included under that name, and we are told that if we earnestly desire and seek it we shall obtain it. The persecuted for justice' sake are they who will not abandon their faith or virtue for any cause.

Q. 715. Who may be rightly called merciful?

A. The merciful are they who practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and who aid by word or deed those who need their help for soul or body.

Q. 716. Why are the clean of heart promised so great a reward?

A. The clean of heart, that is, the truly virtuous, whose thoughts, desires, words and works are pure and modest, are promised so great a reward because the chaste and sinless have always been the most intimate friends of God.

Q. 717. What is the duty of a peacemaker?

A. It is the duty of a peacemaker to avoid and prevent quarrels, reconcile enemies, and to put an end to all evil reports of others or evil speaking against them. As peacemakers are called the children of God, disturbers of peace should be called the children of the devil.

Q. 718. Why does Our Lord speak in particular of poverty, meekness, sorrow, desire for virtue, mercy, purity, peace and suffering?

A. Our Lord speaks in particular of poverty, meekness, sorrow, desire for virtue, mercy, purity, peace and suffering because these are the chief features in His own earthly life; poverty in His birth, life and death; meekness in His teaching; sorrow at all times. He eagerly sought to do good, showed mercy to all, recommended chastity, brought peace, and patiently endured suffering.