

PASTORAL LETTER
ON THE BEATITUDES

Dear Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and my dear people,

Thy Kingdom Come!
Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

As we all know, 'the Beatitudes' is one of the most foundational and beautiful teachings of Jesus in the Bible. There were many great men and women, even those of other faiths who were inspired and influenced by the Beatitudes. The Father of our nation, Gandhiji, is one among many such personalities. The Beatitude has a universal dimension as it does not have any religious affinity in its teaching. Indeed, it teaches a universal principle of charity, compassion, consolation, empathy, and inclusiveness. It assures a promise of joy, satisfaction and happiness. A genuine meditation on the Beatitude gives one a great peace of mind and tranquility, irrespective of one's faith allegiance. We shall resolve to meditate on the Beatitudes again and again to assimilate into our life its spirit and the injunctions it imparts to everyone.

The term “Beatitudes” comes from the Latin word 'beatus' meaning 'blessed' or happy. They are series of teachings, usually counted 'eight', delivered by our Lord at the beginning of His Sermon on the Mount (Cf. Mt. 5:3-10. & Lk. 6:20-23). They essentially outline the character and the mindset of a true follower of Christ and promise a blessing for those who embody the spiritual qualities, often in contrast to what the world typically value. Each Beatitude follows a pattern: “Blessed are....” upon a specific group, followed by the promise of their reward (for they shall...). They present a radical vision of the Kingdom of heaven, where true happiness is found not in worldly power or wealth, but in humility and spiritual righteousness. The Beatitudes are meant to establish the Kingdom of heaven on earth, which will bring true peace and freedom for all who dare to follow him as disciples. It is through these disciples that his kingdom will bring blessings to all people on earth. The Beatitudes serve as a sort of preamble to the sermon on the Mount, but they are as even more memorable treasury for humanity. The Beatitudes give a succinct statement of the values of the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus announced and summarized the principles of Kingdom life that will articulate in the sermon that follows: Beatitudes are the blueprint for Christian discipleship. Jesus promises that when you do suffer for his name, you will be blessed and your reward will be great in heaven. Thus the Beatitudes serve as a blueprint for Christian discipleship guiding us on a journey of faith and action. They challenge us to reflect the character of Christ to the world. They are a clarion call to action. They Challenge us to rethink our values and priorities and embrace humility, and seek justice.

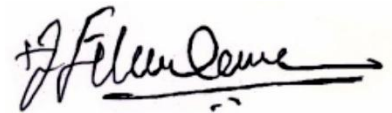
The key themes of the Beatitudes may be summarized as follows:

1. Human affection and action in the Kingdom of God.

2. The humble, generous, and non-violent character of the Kingdom people.
3. The cost and reward of following Jesus.

The Beatitudes include eight sayings from Jesus about living out his Kingdom reality. Indeed, they are a set of blessings pronounced by Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount, outlining qualities and attitudes valued in the Kingdom of Heaven. These statements are not just descriptions of happiness but rather declarations of God's grace and a picture of the character of His Kingdom. The eight sayings of the Beatitudes can be grouped into two sets of four with the first four focusing on a disciples' relationship with God and the second four focusing on their relationship with others. In one sense, they point to the summary of the Ten Commandments; discipleship refers to love for God (Cf. Mk 12 : 30) and relationship refers to love for neighbors/others (Cf. Mk 12:31). Thus, the Beatitudes found in Mt 5:3-12 and Lk. 6:20-23 are series of blessings spoken by Jesus describing the character and qualities of those who are considered blessed or fortunate, promising rewards both in life in this world and in the afterlife. The Beatitudes emphasize humility, compassion, and a focus on spiritual rather than material wealth. They offer a moral guide for Christians, outlining how they should live their lives in accordance with the divine teachings. Indeed, the Beatitudes are profound declarations that outline the character and destiny of those who live as citizens of God's Kingdom. Each Beatitude is a reversal of the general standard of blessedness in the world of today. They turn the world's wisdom upside down. True blessedness is not about a comfortable life, but a life aligned with God's will and purpose. As a result, they function as a manifesto or a moral compass for discipleship. Each Beatitude recognizes one's complete spiritual need, humility, and utter dependence on God, rather than self-sufficiency or pride. In essence, the Beatitudes offer a challenging yet hopeful blueprint for a life that is truly blessed, not by the fickle favour of the world, but by the eternal grace and promise of God's Kingdom. The Beatitudes in general invite us to be disciples of Christ, partaking in the life and the attitude of Christ himself. In the tongue of St. Paul, the Beatitudes call us to bear the mind of Christ (Cf. Phil. 2:5) to practice humility, compassion, concern for others, obedience, empathy, oneness with God and human kind, love of poverty, suffering, etc. We shall make deep reflections of each declaration and promise in the Beatitudes, day by day, week after week and month after month in this year of the Beatitudes. God bless you.

Yours devotedly in Christ



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