

THE EIGHT BEATITUDES:

Which are the eight Beatitudes?

The eight Beatitudes are:

- (1) Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

(a) The poor in spirit are those who, however great their wealth, dignity, learning, etc. acknowledge that in God's sight they are poor, and realize that their riches come from God. They are detached in heart and mind from worldly possessions, for love of God. Even in this life they are at peace, a foretaste of heaven. Thus a rich man may in fact be poor in spirit, if he is not attached to his wealth, but spends it freely for good causes and is willing to be parted from it at God's will. On the other hand a poor man is not truly poor in spirit, if he is not resigned to his poverty, but envies the rich, if he is poor against his will, or prides himself on some quality of his.

(b) In general, the poor in this world's goods are also poor in spirit. They are saved from temptations into which the wealthy fall. This is one reason for seeking poverty voluntarily, according to Christ's counsel. Our Lord often emphasized the difficulty of salvation when one is rich: "But woe to you rich!" for you are now having your comfort" (St. Luke) "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor. . . and come, follow me." (St. Matthew) "With difficulty will a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven." (St. Matthew).

(c) We are, however, expected to be industrious. Pauperism which is the result of laziness is not a virtue. Beggary which can be avoided is not beneficial either to the individual or to society in general. Each one is obliged to provide for himself and for those dependent on him.

- (2) Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth."

(a) The meek are those who, though of a naturally fiery disposition, master their anger, impatience, or desires for revenge.

The meek man does not get angry or curse or murmur under his breath, or think badly of those around him. He is rather even tempered, and does not flare up when things do not work properly around him. He forgives his enemies, and even wins them by gentle words. He imitates Christ, Who said: "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart." (St. Matthew)