

On Line and On Point

MARY MOTHER OF JESUS INCLUSIVE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

marymotherofjesus.org

SAINTS—In what we call the Beatitudes, Jesus describes his followers' blessed way of life in eight ways. One approach to understanding this teaching is to consider it as a threefold insight into a disciple's interior dispositions; the way those dispositions are expressed in dealings with others; and the results for which Jesus' disciples can hope.

The last of the beatitudes, articulated in two different ways, reminds Christians that Jesus is their model and that the more they imitate him, the more they can expect to share his sorrows, his sufferings and his joy.

Speaking about the attitudes that mark disciples, we hear Jesus call them to be poor in spirit, meek and pure of heart. These attitudes characterize a person who trusts in God for everything.

Jesus' word "poor" depicts genuine beggars. The poor in spirit are people who delight in the realization that everything they have and are is a free gift from God. Those who cultivate that attitude sound like Jesus' mother, who sang, "The Lord has done great things for me."

Such an attitude is incompatible with pretension or lording it over others. It culminates in gratitude. The gratitude of the meek and poor in spirit leads inevitably to a purity of heart like that of Mary, who defined herself solely as "the handmaid of the Lord," a person who decided that the entire purpose of her life was to respond to God's great love.

Obviously, the attitudes Jesus described spring from a deep, loving relationship with God. Handmaids and servants of God are people who

have opened themselves to feel with God's heart. They hunger and thirst for justice because they long for the world to be as God created it to be: a milieu in which everyone and everything flourishes, in which the gifts of each enhance the life of all.

God's handmaids and servants mourn over the chasm that separates what is from what ought to be. The poor in spirit are impelled to express mercy because they know that when they received mercy, it made them whole, brought them closer to others and made the world a better place.

The meek and merciful who hunger for justice are uniquely equipped to be peacemakers. Because they naturally seek to understand others' deepest desires, their empathy breeds trust, and thus they can open others' hearts to seek the good of the whole.

Jesus calls these people the blessed because they have caught onto his understanding of life. Learning from him, leaning on grace, each in

their own unique way, they fulfill their potential as genuine human beings.

What we can note about them — whether they be the saints depicted on the tapestries or the ones who inhabit the streets where we live — is that they come in every shape, size, color and age. They are set apart, not by their intelligence, talent, education, work, mother tongue or culture, but by the fact that, like Jesus and Mary, they have accepted their life as a vocation to holiness, an opportunity to receive and spread God's limitless love.—*Mary M. McClone*, National Catholic Reporter article



Tapestries depicting saints are seen in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles. (Dreamstime/Luis E. Torres Franco)

Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community Mission Statement

We are a Christ-centered community of equals, consisting of women and men, ordained and non-ordained, empowered by the Spirit whose mission is to worship, to serve, to promote compassion, justice and care for creation.

REFLECTIONS on last weekend's Liturgy—We began with our opening prayer: Oh Holy One, we are delighted to gather with you as we share this sacred space and as we celebrate our oneness in you. We are living in a time of great darkness, but the darkness shall not overcome us. It never has, and it never will. However, experiencing the darkness is essential to coming and growing into the Light. It is experiencing the death and resurrection. You gave us the most loving and reassuring of messages when you said, "You are the light of the world." We envision the day when our light, and the light of all inhabiting this planet, overcomes the darkness and we more fully experience the KINdom of God on Earth. We live with the comfort of knowing you are with us as we walk each day in conscious awareness of our responsibility to be the light we wish to see in the world. And to this, we say, AMEN

LIFE IS LIKE MUSIC—Kathryn Shea will be heading a task force made up of volunteer MMOJ members, ordained and non-ordained. This committee will write a job description for our music ministry position(s), develop a process for handling performance assessments and how those issues will be resolved in a respectful and transparent manner and identify who will manage. So, committee members are needed. If you would like to help in this effort, please contact Kathryn at KSheaconsulting@outlook.com or call 941-650-6592.



OUTREACH—Until the end of the year 2020, we will be directing our financial gifts to the **Community Foundation of Sarasota County**, an umbrella group of multiple groups and organizations. We will be directing our donations to their "the Designated Fund" ...and in that large group, it will go to "Community Care," directed by Kirsten Russell, Vice President for Community Impact.

PREPARING for this weekend's Liturgy — Presiders, Bridget Mary and Pat MacMillan present their celebration of the Liturgy with the following statement: In this Liturgy we honor our favorite saints who have gone before us and all

saints-in-the-making at our homily sharing time. Let us then reflect on the saints as treasures of our faith and caring friends in a delightful 3 minute video entitled "Who Cares About Saints" by Jesuit Fr. Jim Martin. Readers are Mary Al and Elena Garcia. Shared homily will be made up from offerings of community by which we will hear about holy ones who are examples for us.

OFFERINGS—Please remember to make your regular donations to MMOJ by sending your check to MMOJ % St. Andrew UCC, 6908 Beneva Road, Sarasota. FL 34238. We are grateful for your continued contribution toward the growth and development of our community. Tabulation of offerings and donations are announced when they are received from St Andrew UCC and—in turn—sent to Joan Meehan, MMOJ Treasurer.

QUOTE—What is a saint? A saint is someone who has achieved a remote human possibility. It is impossible to say what that possibility is. I think it has something to do with the energy of love. Contact with this energy results in the exercise of a kind of balance in the chaos of existence. A saint does not dissolve the chaos; if she did the world would have changed long ago. Do not think that a saint dissolves the chaos even for herself, for there is something arrogant and warlike in the notion of a human setting the universe in order. It is

a kind of balance that is her glory. She rides the drifts like an escaped ski. Her course is a caress of the hill. Her track is a drawing of the snow in a moment of its particular arrangement with wind and rock. Something in her so loves the world that she gives herself to the laws of gravity and chance. Far from flying with the angels, she traces with the fidelity of a seismograph needle the state of the solid bloody landscape. Her house is dangerous and finite, but she is at home in the world. She can love the shapes of human beings, the fine and twisted shapes of the heart. It is good to have among us such humans, such balancing giants of love.—Adapted from Beautiful Losers by Leonard Cohen [provided by Mary Theresa Streck]

FORMATION FOR NONVIOLENT LIVING

Making distance works—What I am doing by putting distance between my offended self and the offender, whether that be geographic or temporal, is to give myself space and time. How? Different strategies work for different people. For example, I may say “I can’t talk right now” and resolutely resist engaging in an argument, even if the other person demands that we “settle this right away.” And as I walk away, I offer “We’ll talk later,” and I mean just that.

A different distancing—When I find myself experiencing internal violence, even though I don’t know its immediate source, a different distancing is called for. When I feel tense, angry, ready to lash out, I am in need of divine assistance to help me acknowledge what is happening and to search out its cause. On my own, the temptation will be to justify myself by finding something or someone to blame. Yet, when inclined to do such an inner search, this alerts me to what is really going on—something deeper is being touched. Rather than seeking distance, I need to focus on my experience, to stay with it and let it gradually reveal the deeper cause of my anger and violence. It is to this cause that I must direct my response.

Wait in prayerful patience—If I stay with the experience, wait in prayerful patience, I may discover the specifics of that deeper woundedness which is bringing on my present difficulty. Maybe I am upset because I am jealous, or I want to lash out at someone because I still grieve over a childish injustice, or my speech is harsh because I have been verbally abused. I have found the source of my violence; here is redemptive opportunity.

Violence does require some response—No matter what its source, violence cannot be safely ignored. Energy has been aroused and must be released in ways appropriate to the source and the situation. Brief physical expression can get rid of some of the tension in my body and free me to move on, such as, shredding into satisfying small bits a letter that includes a verbal attack and dropped into the nearest wastebasket. Caution: Extensive physical expression may perpetrate rather than release pent-up emotion. Violence begets violence.

When the conflict centers on differing opinions—In such situations, another response may be more appropriate. It is important to make a deliberate effort to focus on what the other is saying or not saying, which is in marked contrast to my more natural response to be busy formulating my rebuttal. Failure to listen—an everyday form of assault so ordinary that we fail to recognize it—is the kind of defensiveness that I can communicate in body language even when I say nothing. My impatience shows, and unfortunately adds to the tense atmosphere.

Try dialogue—When people of differing opinions dialogue with each other in an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity to the other’s position, with patient listening and honest sharing, love grows—even if the positions remain diametrically opposed. Fortunately, both parties will have come closer to the truth because each will have been exposed to a different point of view, and both will have grown in trust because they have risked conflict and come through in peace. Such a climate of understanding and mutual respect builds community, even if it doesn’t solve the problems that occasioned the original disagreement.

Does this describe the ideal?—I mean, my attempts at dialogue don’t go usually that smoothly. Well, that happens for others too. So, what are some nonviolent ways to respond when, no matter how attentive our listening might be, we can’t seem to hear each other; when past unresolved issues lie between us like a solid wall of misunderstanding; when our insecurities and emotional woundedness are so deep that rational discourse seems hopeless?

Some ways to respond—First of all, make sure the issue is worth the conflict. I may decide to let the issue drop, at least for the present. I “give in,” but not out of indifference and surely not out of fear; but out of a real love that chooses what the other wants rather than what I want. However, I might also remain firm in love. We confront the other with the truth; we take our stand and remain there, even in the face of a violent reaction. This is what Jesus did that often put him in conflict with religious authorities. He tried persuasion, responded to questions, offered his credentials. Yet, in the end, continued on to Jerusalem knowing what awaited him there. *[to be continued]*

“Look closely at the present you are constructing: it should look like the future you are dreaming.”
—Alice Walker