

The Beatitudes

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First Conference

Preliminary Remarks:

Before speaking of the Beatitudes individually, let us consider some of those aspects they all have in common.

I believe it is important to know what we mean by the expression “A Beatitude”. What is a Beatitude?

Considered as a statement or an assertion, a Beatitude expresses the idea, which is also a conviction, that a certain category of persons is fortunate, that is, has reason to consider himself lucky, and thus has reason to rejoice and feel happy. After all, the Latin word Beatitudo from which our word Beatitude comes, means both blessedness and happiness.

Then each of the Beatitudes asserts or mentions one of the several categories of persons that deserve to be deemed fortunate and blessed. The categories are distinguished by a certain aspect or fact about the persons embraced by the category. For some of the categories, the special aspect is merely a quality of soul, a trait or characteristic. For others it is not only a certain state of soul, but also what flows from it, a characteristic way of relating to other persons. For still others, it is a characteristic way of being acted upon by others, and still in others it consists in the perception on not being acted upon by others in certain ways.

And really, what is more fundamental and common to all the beatitudes is the special attribute of Wisdom, which enables a person properly to evaluate the aspects and the life experiences proper to each of the beatitudes, and see them as so precious and valuable that if indeed these statements are true of himself, he has every reason to consider himself happy. This is true, even though the world evaluates those states of soul and life experiences as being intolerable, and to be avoided or overcome at all cost.

Now what would those qualities or attributes of soul be? Well, we have poverty of spirit; we have meekness; we have purity of heart. The categories which comprise a certain characteristic way of acting upon others would be the merciful and the peace-makers. The category which is comprised of being acted upon by others is that of being persecuted. And finally, the category comprised by the perception of not-being-acted-upon in a certain way is that of hunger and thirst for justice. We could also think of the category of meekness as being a characteristic way of not reacting in certain situations; and we could call the category of hunger and thirst for justice also the awareness of a lack of the virtue of justice, or better, the awareness of the lack of holiness.

So having made these general remarks about the beatitudes, let me state briefly the technique applied in coming up with the conferences on the beatitudes. We will reflect upon the meanings of certain words that occur in the beatitudes, and in doing so, we will try to get help from common experience, and see where these reflections lead, and how they might be applied to spiritual realities, chiefly our

lives as children of God by adoption and better yet, as Lay Discalced Carmelites, since the promise or commitment that incorporates one into the Order specifically mentions the Beatitudes.

Having finished with those preliminaries, we can go on to consider the first of the beatitudes as found in the Gospel of St. Matthew:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Reign (or Kingdom) of God is theirs.”

St. Luke gives a slightly different version:

Blessed are you poor! The Kingdom of Heaven is yours.”

The fact that St. Matthew says “*poor in spirit*” and St. Luke says simply “*the poor*” has given rise to a great deal of speculation. That is because it seems quite obvious that more than just being poor in the worldly sense of indigence or destitution is required to possess the Kingdom of Heaven. Actually, since St. Matthew was the first to write his Gospel, we are surprised that he was not to say just “poor” so that St. Luke could correct any possible misinterpretation by saying “poor in spirit.” Perhaps the difference can be explained by supposing that St. Luke was addressing the Gentile believers, that is poor Christians who had accepted and were living the Gospel, that is living by the Holy Spirit, and so it was not necessary to say what kind of poverty caused one to be in the Kingdom.

On the other hand, perhaps Matthew, who wrote in Aramaic and was addressing and appealing to Jews to become Christian, had to say “*poor in spirit*” because in Jewish tradition God rewarded fidelity to the Law with material prosperity, so it was quite possible in their way of thinking to be both in the Kingdom of God and to be wealthy. That mentality was so characteristic of Jews that the Apostles were stunned and asked outright “*Then who can be saved?*” after Jesus had said: Amen, *Amen I tell you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”*

But however we try to explain the difference in the two versions, we must always cling to the conviction that they are not contradictory, and that each version is true as intended by the inspired author.

In any event, in view of what Jesus told the Apostles after the rich young man went away sad because he had many possessions, and he was not prepared to give them all away in order to follow Jesus, what is pretty clear to all is that it is really easier for the worldly poor to become “poor in spirit” than it is for those who are wealthy.

But before we go on to consider the meaning of “poor in spirit”, it might be well for us to try to get a good understanding of what is meant by the expression “*the Reign of God*” or *Kingdom of God.*” And to do that, I think we have to reflect upon the nature and purpose of civil society, and in particular the way civil society is governed, since we no longer have kingdoms as they existed in ancient times, they have been succeeded by our modern day national societies and governments.

We ask the question, then: why do we have governments that exercise various kinds of authority in our national societies?

Probably the simplest and most accurate answer to that is: To see to it that every member of the nation or society has (1) his or her basic human needs satisfied and (2) that this takes place in an atmosphere of order and harmony, and therefore in peace.

But what do we mean by basic human needs?

By the word basic we mean all that is essential, all that is required in virtue of the humanity God conferred upon us in creating us. Basic does not include those things which are the creation of our own deliberate wants and desires. I think we can all agree that there are so many things in our complicated, technological, and consumer oriented society that we think we need, but really do not.

By the word human we mean those things that are essential to us as embodied spirits endowed with intelligence and free will, memory and imagination, and who have been created by God to know Him, love Him and serve Him in this life and to be happy with Him forever in the next. Thus we have bodily needs, emotional needs (which I use to include intellectual and volitional needs) and spiritual needs.

The word “need” doesn’t have to be explained. Whenever we need something it means we do not have something that we should have in order to be complete or to be normal.

Although it is true that many of our basic human needs can be supplied through personal effort, the fact remains that there are so many others that we cannot provide for ourselves, and that we must look to others to supply them. That is why we have society, so that some other member of society may be found to provide, whether individually or collectively, for our bodily, emotional and spiritual needs, and any or all possible combinations thereof.

Of course, we would not be Christian if we were convinced that other people existed only to supply my own personal needs of body and soul. It is not even “human” to think like that. It is “human” to realize and acknowledge that society is a two-way street. I exist for the good of others, just as others exist for my personal good.

It is not difficult to identify our bodily needs: food, clothing, shelter, activity, rest, and all those things that preserve us in good physical health. But of course, good health is not an end in itself, it is a means to serve more noble ends, namely the needs of our minds and hearts.

We have a need to know, and we have a need to share knowledge. We have a need to converse and to communicate. We have a need to express the sentiments and affections of our hearts. We also have a need to work, that is engage in some kind of creative endeavor, to produce good and noble results, good and noble lasting and permanent effects. All of these are possible only within a society, and all of these can only take place if a civil government is in place to see to it that everyone can satisfy these needs in peace and security. In a word, a kingdom or a society is necessary so that we can be “persons” in the fullest sense of the word.

Introducing the word “person” reminds us that the most basic as well as the most inclusive need of all is for us “to love” and its necessary counterpart “to be loved.”

Really, though the need “to love” is the greatest and most important need, since we are made in the image and likeness of God, the fact of our fallen, that is wounded human nature causes us to be blind

to that truth and to think that the most basic need is “to be loved”, and fallen human nature can cause us to think that others exist only to serve, not only our every need, but even our every whim.

I believe scripture supports the assertion that the need to love is more fundamental and important than the need to be loved because Jesus is reported to have said (by St. Paul) *that there is more happiness in giving than in receiving*. Because the greatest lovers are the greatest givers and the most forgetful of self, I think we can say there is greater happiness in loving - in being for others - than in being loved. And Jesus came, having emptied Himself - to give us life. He came “loving”. Therein He found His greatest joy.

Now we can ask, *How does the Kingdom of God or the Reign of God differ from the societies we are familiar with on earth?*

In my opinion, it is a difference of attitude, and better yet, a difference of conviction. In an earthly kingdom there is an idea that almost everyone seems to take for granted, even though most people may not be consciously aware of it. It is like an axiom, which states “There is not enough to go around, so I had better make sure that I get mine.” And as a kind of corollary: “If anyone comes to me for those things that I can supply to fulfill his needs, I am going to make him pay dearly for it, so that I will have the money better to compete for the little there is to go around.”

In the kingdom of God there is no such thing as a limited supply for which all are competing. There is no such assertion as: “This is mine; this belongs to me.” In the Kingdom of God, everything is for everyone. If I happen to hold and be in control of certain goods and resources which others need to supply their basic human needs, I realize that I do so only as a manager, a steward, and a trustee. Everything I hold and control belongs to God. Thus, where the Kingdom of God exists, that is, where God reigns, no one is ever deprived of his basic human needs.

The human needs certainly include all those already mentioned: to know and share knowledge, to converse, communicate, share experiences, engage in creative activities. But in the kingdom of Heaven, all this is done gratis; everyone is willing to give and serve without seeking some sort of payment or compensation in return. Indeed, it is precisely this which satisfies our deepest human need to love. The Kingdom of Jesus is within us, it is a mentality like that of Jesus, who came, not to be served but to serve. Since Jesus did not deem equality with God the Father something He should cling to, but divested Himself of that equality, so to speak, for a time, and took the form of a servant. Thus in the Kingdom of Heaven, no one is for himself. Each one in the Kingdom of Heaven is for everyone else, particularly for those most in need of his services.

Thus I believe that we can almost identify “poverty of spirit” with “that mind which was in Christ Jesus”, as St. Paul expresses it. Almost, because, though we don’t know specifically what other truths were present in the mind of Jesus besides not deeming divinity something to cling to (or as older versions say: not thinking it robbery to be in the form of God) we can guess at what they were by considering what kind of thoughts and awareness has to be in someone who is able to forget self completely and is able to be for others and serve others and to put all their resources at the disposal of others with no thought of remuneration.

If the world poor are keenly aware that they own nothing (or very little) then the “poor in spirit” would also have to be aware that they have nothing they can call their own. They would be vividly aware that all their assets were given to them outright, they could never have earned or merited them. These would include assets of body, soul and spirit, physical strength and ability, knowledge, virtues,

talents and skills, an affectionate and loving heart, etc. And in addition the awareness that these were given by God for no other reason than they should be used to enrich the lives of others. They would not dare claim ownership of these goods of body, mind and heart nor dream of using them in order to enrich themselves.

Thus even someone who is “blessed” with a great abundance of the choicest talents and abilities and skills and virtues could still be “poor in spirit” and to a sublime degree, because able to acknowledge that all of them are a pure gift of God.

We might wonder if there is anything we can call our own or for which we can claim some kind of credit.

It seems to me that the only things we can call our own are our free choices. It is we ourselves who must accept praise or blame for what it is we freely choose to do. But even here, strictly speaking, only our sins are truly ours. All the good choices we make, even the free choice to develop and improve our natural talents and abilities so as to more effectively and more perfectly use them to enrich others is ultimately due to the actual grace and help offered by God to make that free choice and to persevere in it. Ultimately, it is to those special helps that we have freely only said “yes” to that we must attribute all our good deeds - even holy thoughts and desires.

I am sure that some of you are thinking that what I have just been saying sounds a lot like what is meant by “spiritual childhood”. Thus “spiritual childhood” would be almost synonymous with “poverty of spirit.”

I do believe, that from a practical point of view, what each achieves, they are pretty nearly identical.

Whereas “poverty of spirit” acknowledges that “I have nothing that I have not received as a gift”. “Spiritual childhood” focuses on “looking to God” for everything, and in particular “looking to God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves,” in particular that without the enabling help God gives, we can do absolutely no good thing. Therese understood that even the desire for great sanctity is given by God to souls who are utterly incapable of achieving the great external apostolic works of heroic charity that are typical of so many great saints. Thus she understood further, that having given the desire, He, God, also could and would fulfill the desire if only the soul would abandon itself entirely to Him and His merciful love with the abandon typical of little children. And so a link between “poverty of spirit” and “spiritual childhood” can also be found in the statement of Jesus: *“Allow the little children to come to me. Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”* That is, the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to little children, just as it belongs to the “poor in spirit.”

Before concluding, I do believe it is worth while to consider an idea that on the surface, sounds like it is related to “poverty of spirit” or “being poor in spirit” and that is the expression “nakedness of spirit.” Someone who is “poor in spirit” could rightly think about his soul as being clothed or equipped with virtues, talents and abilities even though also acknowledging that these all were given by God and belong to God. Is it possible to think of lacking something that God ordinarily gives, but chooses to deprive us of that gift or “divest us” of it?

Yes, I think we can, and we can understand what it is by thinking in terms of health and fitness of body. Along with good health there is always associated a perception or a sense of “well-being.” Similarly, when we are ill, or are wounded or diseased in body, we experience discomfort and pain. We understand why God put this mechanism in us, namely, so that we can seek a timely cure - if that

be His will - and so be able to continue to be and do for others in accord with God's will for us in our particular state of life.

Now we can carry this notion over to our emotional and spiritual health or well being. Ordinarily, there is also a kind of "perception" or "sense of well being" that God has attached to our emotional and spiritual "organism" so to speak. It is a kind of "consolation" or contentment that proceeds from a clear conscience. That is, it proceeds from an awareness based on Faith that one is living in conformity to God's will, and that thus one enjoys the friendship of God. This kind of contentment - a sign of spiritual well being - can be likened to the keep contentment we experience just being in the presence of people we love and whom we know love us.

Ordinarily, with that contentment, we can also call it peace of soul, departs then we ordinarily know something is wrong and we hasten to do what is necessary to remedy the wrong and regain that contentment and peace of soul.

Well, as we all know, God may decide, and surely He does decide in the case of those truly interested in achieving holiness, deprives souls of that contentment and other evidence of well-being even though the individual has not fallen from the state of being perfectly united to the Will of God, indeed continues to be utterly and perfectly faithful to His Will.

And so it is that God can allow the souls of holy people to experience aridity, darkness and desolation. When He allows this, then the person who is "poor in spirit" by serving without looking for any kind of compensation from those he serves will have a chance to discover whether he is nevertheless looking for some other kind of consolation, namely spiritual rewards and consolations. When he is able to continue unswervingly to serve others generously and be for others even without this reward, then that person could be said to be experiencing "nakedness of spirit" and would be the highest form of poverty of spirit.

How then would one go about acquiring that state of soul we call "poor in spirit?" If what I have said is true, namely, that it consists in the conviction that all we have and are is a pure gift of God, even though mediated to us through others, parents, family, teachers, friends, etc. then whatever is able to give us that conviction and is able to nourish it is what we must make use of. Or as St. Paul says: Name *one thing you have that you have not received*.

But in addition, since it includes the idea that I have all that God gave me to use to supply the needs of others, we do well to call to mind frequently that Jesus took on flesh and is both God and man, precisely because it was in and through His humanity that He could satisfy our desperate need to be redeemed and rescued from eternal death.

Second Conference

We will now consider the next in order of the beatitudes given us by St. Matthew. Nowadays there are several versions, depending upon what recent translation you are using. In fact, the Vulgate ordering is also different from the recent translations. As the second beatitude states:

Blessed are the meek, for they will possess the land.

Some of the other versions are (1) *Blessed are the patient; they shall inherit the land;* (2) *Happy (are) the gentle; they shall have the earth as their heritage.* (3) *Blessed are the lowly; they shall inherit the land;* and another that begins like the Vulgate or Douay-Rhims version (4) *Blessed are the meek,* concludes with “*they shall inherit the earth.*”

We wonder why there have to be so many different versions, but perhaps it is a good thing that different translators use different words to render the meaning of the word in the original languages: Aramaic and Greek. Surely those original words were so rich in meaning that one English word alone cannot convey them all, and so we can broaden and flesh out our understanding and appreciation of this beatitude. Surely the combination of the different words more accurately reveal what Jesus had in mind when stating this beatitude, and so by approaching it from different angles as points of view, we get a better knowledge of what constitutes that “state of soul” or “quality of soul” which merits that the person possessing it be called “happy” or “blessed.”

We can begin by asking what the difference is between saying “Blessed are”, and “Happy are”, etc.

It seems to me that when we use the word “blessed”, we do not have in mind a conscious awareness on the part of the person we deem blessed as blessed. Also, a person can be blessed in the sense of being gifted or endowed with admirable talents and qualities, and yet not be happy. Ordinarily for us to be “happy” we need to have a conscious awareness of being in possession of something good and valuable, which in turn gives rise to that “feeling” of gladness, contentment or joy that we associate with “happiness.” Thus, where there is no conscious awareness of, or “feeling” of, being very well off, the word lucky or fortunate would better characterize the person this beatitude calls blessed. I think this is true not only because we do not tend to be consciously focused upon the good things and blessings which God in His merciful kindness has lavished upon us, but also because ordinarily, our fallen human nature does not interpret such things as meekness, gentleness, lowliness or patience as something good and valuable, and thus could not possibly give rise to the “feeling” of happiness and contentedness, even though in reality, they are good and valuable. Otherwise Jesus would not have given us this beatitude. Let us see if we can come up with reasons why these traits or states of soul are to be esteemed and treasured.

When we consider the attribute of “gentleness,” the first things we think of is that it is the opposite of “force” and “violence.” Thus whatever or whoever the “gentle” person is dealing with is certainly never going to be violated or harmed in any way. And digging more deeply, we find that the reason a gentle person does no violence or harm is because of deep respect and appreciation, esteem and reverence for the person, or things he is dealing with. And this in turn tends to indicate charity is present in the soul of the gentle person. Of course, this beatitude has to do with those persons who are always and invariably gentle in all their dealings. Only then is it a sign that charity is present in that person’s soul, because charity holds all persons and creatures “dear” objectively and as they are in themselves, irrespective of any benefit or gain they can provide. Obviously, even selfish persons are gentle (or can be) with persons and things that gratify their selfish purposes, but only for as long

as they continue to provide selfish pleasure. But getting back to the notion of charity: If it is true, and I think it is, that a consistently gentle person is acting out of charity, then what could be more precious. God is charity; and he who abides in charity abides in God, and God in Him. Truly is such a person blessed.

Someone may object that perhaps the trait of “gentleness” could easily proceed from being afraid, or fearful. After all, we tend to be gentle with, that is, “handle with kid-gloves”, those things or persons we are afraid of.

However, people who are afraid are often also “weak” characters. Truly gentle people are always strong and firm. For example, a father or mother can be very gentle with his children, and yet be very firm in regard to discipline. Again, one can be gentle in reacting to someone that is tempting him or trying to provoke his anger, yet be very firm in resisting the provocation.

Then there is another reason why the quality of gentleness is good and valuable and to be considered a blessing: Gentle people are always at peace: at peace within themselves, at peace with God, at peace with their fellow human beings. As you know - one of the reliable signs of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit is peace. This should not surprise us, since it is the Holy Spirit abiding within us that pours forth the charity we just spoke of a moment ago.

Now how can we show that the quality of lowliness is something good and valuable, and thus merits to be deemed a blessing? Well, clearly, lowliness is most often identified (that is in our Catholic spiritual and moral teaching) with humility. The Latin words of the Magnificat: “respexit humilitatem” is translated “He has regarded (looked upon) the lowliness”. That being the case, we can use it (lowliness or lowly) in the place of humility or humble in other passages of scripture. For example: God resists the proud and gives His grace to the “lowly”. So it appears that lowliness, like humility, removes barriers that might be standing between God and the human soul. We can say that lowliness opens the doors and windows of the soul to God so that His “light” and His “pure, fresh air”, can come flooding in as precious graces and favors. God finds no resistance in the lowly when He comes to bestow a greater participation in His Life, His Love, His virtues, His power for good. No wonder Jesus calls such a person blessed!!

Since we are identifying lowliness and humility, and since humility has been defined by St. Teresa our Holy Mother as “standing” or “walking” in truth, a further question about lowliness can be asked: Does lowliness abide in the intellect? Since truth is the proper object of the intellect?

It is my conviction that only the truths upon which humility and lowliness are founded abide in the intellect. As you know, the proper function of the intellect is to get a hold of and grasp and unite to itself all that is objectively real under the aspect of truth. Indeed, by the gift of Faith we are even able to embrace God Himself, the supreme Reality and creator of all things and persons that participate in some finite and analogous way in His infinite and uncreated being, under the aspect of Truth.

But to be truly lowly, a person has love for the truth about himself or herself. A humble and lowly person loves and rejoices in the fact that of himself he is nothing, or even less than nothing because of his sinful tendencies, and that left to himself he is incapable of accomplishing the least good deed. Furthermore, the lowly person loves the fact that all of his good qualities are a pure, unmerited gift of God, and that even the development and use of them is only possible by the personally undeserved grace of God. Since it is the proper function of the Will to love, then the quality of lowliness has to reside in the Will.

Looking at it from another angle, a lowly person “loves” his creatureliness, which sums up all the truth about him. But then even Satan knows he is a creature of God. That truth is in his intellect. But he hates his creatureliness, and therefore he is at the furthest opposite pole from lowliness. His pride even causes him to be a liar and the father of lies. He tries to deny the truth of his creatureliness. This again shows that lowliness resides in our wills, and in view of what I’ve said about Satan, it resides in our free wills.

In any event, because the direct effect of lowliness is to create in our souls a resemblance to the soul of Our Blessed Mother, it is something extremely valuable and precious, not the least of which is that it so pleases God and fills Him (so to speak) with delight.

We can now turn our attention to another of the words used to state this beatitude, namely, patient or the quality of patience. How can we show that patience is such a good and valuable attribute?

Patience is one of the virtues related to the Cardinal Virtue of Fortitude. But just the fact alone that it is a virtue makes it good and precious because virtues are good habits that cause us to attain perfection both as human beings and (for the baptized) as children of God by adoption.

In order to understand how patience helps us to become perfect as human beings we first have to consider what Fortitude does for us. Incidentally, fortitude is not only a virtue. There is also a Gift of the Holy Spirit known as Fortitude.

The purpose of the good habit or Virtue we call Fortitude is to enable us to endure, tolerate and suffer (in the sense of allow) pain and other kinds of evil which either necessarily or occasionally accompany the pursuit of a good of a higher order. When we speak of pain, we mean, ordinarily, that which is perceived by the senses, but there are also, as you know, other kinds of pain, those that afflict the soul and the spirit. Again as you know, all pain is a sign or evidence that something is wrong - some good is lacking - to body, soul or spirit, namely the absence of the sense of well-being we mentioned in the previous conference.

The best example of the virtue of Fortitude is found in the martyrs. The greatest physical evil we can experience is death, especially if we are in good health, as martyrs usually are at the beginning of their suffering. In virtue of the fifth commandment, we are obliged to remain as healthy as possible, without becoming paranoid about it, that is, using ordinary and reasonable means. The reason, of course, is so that we may fulfill God’s will in serving Him and our neighbor. Now the greatest of all goods - a good of a sublime order - is to adhere to God in faith, hope and love, which are the three theological virtues, supernatural virtues which unite us to God and enable us to persevere in the state of union with God. So fortitude comes into play when we have to choose (which for most of us is never) between enduring physical death or letting go of God, as the early Christian martyrs and most martyrs were obliged to do.

They preferred to be tortured and killed rather than deny the truths of our faith, that is let go of God, or what would have been the equivalent, offer sacrifice to the non-existent, pagan gods of Rome.

The reason why patience is a virtue allied with fortitude is because it is the good habit of tolerating pain and privations of a lower order, which one may have to experience as a consequence of clinging to a good of a higher order. This is what makes us “human”; we give priority to goods or perfections of a spiritual order, that is, we prefer the goods of mind and heart and soul to the goods of a physical order.

There are actually two virtues related to fortitude which enable us to do this. Patience is the passive one. (Patience comes from the Latin word patior: to suffer). By it we endure evils of a lower order inflicted upon us in order to cling to a higher good. The other is active and it is the virtue of perseverance. By means of it we are able to inflict the evil of a lower order upon ourselves in order to remain in pursuit of or to cling to a good of a higher order. A good example of how we practice perseverance is to impose upon our sense and our bodies the discipline necessary to gain knowledge or to acquire some of the other virtues, or to be faithful to prayer and all the obligations of our state in life.

The best example of patience is that of Job who endured undeserved suffering without ceasing to love and be submissive to the Will of God. We practice patience when we endure undeserved sufferings and insults inflicted upon us without doing anything sinful to escape the suffering, or without seeking to get revenge on those who inflict the hurt. Clearly anyone who has this state of soul we call “patient” deserves to be considered fortunate or blessed.

Now finally, we can consider meekness, and attempt to show that it, too, is a quality or attribute of soul that is good and valuable and highly to be esteemed.

Traditionally, meekness is the state of soul that is considered the opposite of anger. Now, not all anger is bad, since Jesus, who is meek and humble of heart, did exhibit anger when driving the money changers from the Temple in Jerusalem, His Father’s House. So meekness is the opposite of that variety of anger of which scripture says: “*Anger does not accomplish the will of God.*” Since by means of meekness we overcome the temptations to violate the Will of God, it stands to reason that it helps us persevere or to continue in the state of being united to the will of God. We could deduce the same conclusion from a statement of Jesus that we take in conjunction with His admonition: *Learn of me because I am meek..*, the other statement being: “*I always do the will of my Father.*”

We would do well to keep in mind what kind of anger does not violate the will of God. That is the “passion” of anger - but again - not passion in the bad sense, but those spontaneous first movements that arise in us when set off by certain “perceptions” and which precede the intervention of our free will. God gave them to us precisely so that we would immediately and instinctively do what is necessary to ward off a sudden thrust of imminent harm. Now by its nature, the passion of anger does predispose one to do violence, and deliberate violence is not an attribute of God. Thus it is only when the will freely decides to drive away or destroy the impending evil in a manner contrary to God’s will or in a measure that exceeds the just measure required (that is without inflicting undue harm) that anger freely consented to does not do God’s will.

Jesus’ conduct then, is the first and foremost example of what just anger is. When He drove the money changers and the merchandise of the vendors out of the temple the evil that was inflicted upon Him was the grievous pain of seeing His Father’s house desecrated, converted into a den of thieves. His Sacred Humanity did indeed exhibit all the signs of the passion of anger as He took direct action to dispel the desecration, in which a certain amount of “violence” was used. But the violence was not directed at any human being. It did no harm. He used the whip of cords only to make a lot of noise, and He harmed no one by striking tables and overturning them. Because He was like us in all things but sin, Jesus did have the “passion” of anger, but He never allowed it to over-power and coerce His will to do evil, as happens often in the rest of us who are afflicted with a fallen human nature, wounded and disordered by original sin.

Thus it is that meek persons do experience the spontaneous first movements that we call the passion of anger. But like Jesus, the meek person keeps them firmly in control of the will.

We may ask the question, how can I keep the instinctive sentiments of anger firmly under control of my will?

We can do so by having our memory filled with facts and ideas that can “defuse the anger” and which we resort to whenever tempted to do unlawful harm or violence to one who has provoked it. We can remind ourselves that everything that happens is allowed by Divine Providence, at least by God’s permissive Will, and that He only allows those things out of which He can draw greater good. (Remember the “happy fault” of the Easter Vigil proclamation). We can recall that suffering cheerfully endured for love of Jesus and in union with His sufferings become redemptive and win graces of salvation and conversion for souls in need.

We can also remember that sufferings willingly accepted for love of God are also purifying, in the sense that they shorten the time of purification necessary after death in purgatory. All of this requires only the exercise of faith.

In those instances when the harm is about to be inflicted by some other person or as the result of someone else’s recent conduct, whether the person intends to harm us or not, we can try to practice heroic charity by making sincere acts of benevolence toward that person - that is by sincerely wishing and desiring the very best for that person, and by praying and making sacrifices for his greater spiritual good. We can go even further by performing acts of loving kindness toward that person. And the love becomes all the more heroic, pure and sanctifying and redemptive, the greater the deliberateness of the conduct that threatens to hurt us.

At this point we might ask, how does meekness differ from “gentleness”?

It seems to me that gentle persons are usually the initiators of conduct, who actively deal reverently and respectfully toward others. The meek person is one who re-acts with gentleness when provoked, that is, when the average person would react with violence. Thus it seems that meek persons will always be gentle as well, but we cannot always be sure that a gentle person is going to be able to control the first movements of anger.

Again a question: Isn’t it true that meek persons tend to get stomped upon and others easily take advantage of them?

Well, meekness is so characteristic of Jesus that like Jesus, truly meek persons would also be holy, and always deal justly with provocators as Jesus did. A meek person would “confront” a provocator in a calm, firm and peaceful manner, so as to cause the person to desist. But if that did not succeed, the meek person would make reasonable and lawful efforts to get out of the way of the harm. But of course, if that doesn’t work, then like Jesus, the meek person would suffer it and offer it for the conversion of the offender.

And in conclusion: What would be the relationship between the state of soul mentioned in this Beatitude and the reward or “fruit” it produces? Namely, to “possess the land” as the Vulgate says, or to “inherit the earth” as most of the others say.

With regard to possessing the land, there does not seem to be any direct causal link between meekness, patience, lowliness and gentleness. In fact, from the human point of view, people with those qualities seem least likely to get control, possession of anything. The only way the fruit or result will come about, it seems, would be for God Himself to intervene in the course of human affairs, by means of His Divine Providence, that indeed, the land does come into the possession of those persons of whom this beatitude speaks. After all, Jesus did say: *“Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice and all else will be given you besides.”* Surely, being meek, patient, lowly and gentle is more than just seeking the Kingdom of Heaven, such folks seem already to have a firm grasp upon it. But perhaps the expression *“possess the land”* does not mean what I am reading into it: namely ownership of land. Perhaps it only means that if there is anything in the whole wide world that these blessed people need for the good of their souls and their loved ones, God Himself will see to it that it comes into their possession. When Peter asked what “portion” would fall to the Apostles, who had left all to follow Him, Jesus replied, *“You who have given up father, mother, spouse, brothers and sisters, homes and lands to follow me, will have hundreds of fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, homes and lands (and persecution besides) in this life, and eternal happiness in the next.”* Perhaps in some similar way, our Lord sees to it that anything that belongs to members of Christ’s Body, the Church, will be provided if and when those who enjoy the blessedness of their beatitude should need it.

It’s a bit easier to see a link between meekness, patience, lowliness and gentleness and “inheriting” the earth. Inheriting does not require any doing on the part of the heir to come into possession of an inheritance. He merely has to be “related to” the one from whom He inherits. Since *“the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof”*, it is reasonable to suppose that the children of God are the natural heirs. Of course we don’t inherit from God in the strict sense since God cannot die. So again, I believe we have to fall back on the notion that when His children do show the family traits of meekness, patience, gentleness and lowliness (humility) as did Jesus, then the Father sees to it that we have all the material things we need, which, ultimately are produced by the earth, the land.

But whatever is meant by possessing and inheriting the earth, we can be sure of this truth left us by St. John of the Cross: *Mine are the Heavens and mine is the earth. Mine are the peoples, the just are mine and mine are the sinners. The angels are mine and the Mother of God, and all things are mine, and God Himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me!”*

Third Conference

Today we consider the third beatitude in the ordering of *the Vulgate*, which is the second in the ordering of the newer translations. In these latter, the beatitude we considered in the previous conference is the third in the recent versions.

In any event, the beatitude states:

“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted”.

Amazingly, all the newer versions say the same thing, substantially, except that the Jerusalem Bible uses “*Happy*” in the place of blessed.

Following the procedure we mentioned in the first conference, we ask: What does it mean “to mourn”? Well, because ordinarily mourning is caused by a loss of some beloved person or of something we valued highly, we can safely say that “to mourn” means to experience sorrow or sadness through the awareness of the absence and the never-to-be-present-again of the person or thing in question.

Of course, everyone in this life sooner or later loses a loved one, and therefore has had occasion to mourn and experience grief, but I do not think that therefore we are blessed in the way this beatitude intends. We eventually get over the sorrow of having lost a dear one, and besides, our Faith reminds us that we really haven’t lost them for good. We know that we will be reunited with our dear departed in the next life.

So, what would be the kind of mourning or sorrow that is envisioned by this beatitude? It seems to me that it is the sorrow caused by some kind of suffering or pain other than that caused by the death of a loved one, and in addition, it is a pain or suffering that endures a long time, perhaps for one’s lifetime on earth.

In saying that the sorrow and mourning could last a lifetime, it appears that this beatitude would differ in one important respect from the two we’ve already considered. Those two we would expect to be fulfilled in this present life, since it is promised that the poor in spirit do possess the Kingdom of God, and because the meek and gentle, etc. can only possess or inherit the earth in this present life. It seems the reward attached to this present beatitude can only be satisfied in the next life - after death.

Though the prayer *Hail Holy Queen* would seem to support this idea, because it refers to this earthly life as “*a valley of tears*”, and thus can only yield to comfort after death, I believe that the comfort spoken of in this beatitude can be and is granted in this life, but only a kind of “comfort” that can co-exist with pain and suffering and mourning. In other words, the comfort granted would be a different order or kind, than the pain and sorrow it co-exists with. One kind of comfort that is of the same order as physical pain, pain perceived by the senses would be the sense of relief and the good feeling that follows the cessation of the physical and sense pain. Obviously these two just cannot co-exist, being of the same order. And the same would hold true of emotional or psychological “pain” and sorrow, and its opposite, a sense of emotional and psychological relief and well being.

To give an example of a comfort that is of a different order, we can take the example of someone who experiences the pain of strenuous physical labor or exertion, or who has to experience the deprivation

of lawful pleasures for the purpose of obtaining good things, of satisfying the needs of the beloved members of his family. Co-existent with the pain and sorrow on one level of his being, there is the comforting thought of the happiness he will bring to his loved ones by his endeavors.

This present beatitude also differs from the first two because they had to do with states of soul that are easily seen to be good and valuable, and thus support the idea that the one who possesses them is blessed and lucky and fortunate.

In this beatitude we are dealing with things that cannot, philosophically speaking, be considered “good and valuable.” Pain, suffering, sorrow, mourning, and the objective causes of them are true evils (in the philosophical sense); they are the absence of a good, an absence of a due perfection, that is, a good or a perfection that should be present, but which is lacking.

Therefore, it is necessary to find the good and valuable implied in this beatitude in something other than the mere “experience” of the evils mentioned. I believe we find it in the fact that “suffering and sorrow” places us in a special and valuable relationship with God and with Our Lord Jesus.

The special relationship with God is found in the story of the Rich Man and the Poor Beggar Lazarus, as recounted to us by Jesus. As you recall, the Rich Man, who had been buried in Hell, saw the Poor Lazarus resting in Abraham’s bosom, and asked Abraham to send Lazarus to him to bring him a tiny bit of relief in his torment. Part of Abraham’s answer is very sobering and thought-provoking: He says, in part: *“My son, remember that during your life good things came your way, just as bad things came the way of Lazarus. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony.”*

Remember also the story of the Holy Innocents, the helpless babies put to death by Herod, who was hoping to kill Jesus. That experience moved God to grant them Heaven and Sanctity.

So it seems undeniable that those who suffer here on earth through no fault of their own, that is, who do not bring suffering upon themselves by their sinful conduct, are compensated by God without any evidence of holy loving on their part, or who, at least, do not hate and lash out against the causes of their suffering.

The relationship with Jesus that suffering makes possible is that they enable one to fill up sufferings lacking in the body of Christ, as St. Paul tells us. Sufferings provide the means of identifying closely with our Lord on the Cross and for the same reason: they can be applied to obtain the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls, and to obtain the release of souls from Purgatory. The mere thought of being able to use pain and sorrow and suffering and all the other causes of mourning can really bring comfort to the sufferer. And even if others do not consider themselves blessed, surely they themselves know how Blessed they are. We have the example of St. Therese and her writings to corroborate what has just been said, and in addition, she saw in suffering a powerful means of letting Jesus know how much she loved Him. And for those of us who wonder how much we really love Jesus, we find in suffering a pretty accurate gauge. Our love is usually proportional to the degree of willingness with which we suffer and to just how much suffering we are willing to endure for Him.

After having said all that, perhaps the element of “good and valuable” in this beatitude which makes the sufferer consider himself blessed is not the awareness of what suffering does and can be used for, but the underlying love that makes it possible for the sufferer to feel blessed.

This is brought out very well by that incident in the life of St. John of the Cross that occurred when he was praying before a painting of Jesus carrying His Cross. Jesus addressed him from the picture: “*John, what do you want [in return] for your toilsome efforts [on My behalf]?*” And John answered: “*Lord, to suffer and be despised for love of you.*” In addition we have the saying of Holy Mother: “*Lord, to suffer or to die.*” And still another great Carmelite Nun - St. Mary Magdela De’Pazzi - I believe: “*Lord, not to die, but to suffer.*”

So, in general, all the truly great Saints loved sufferings and desired it as an inestimable good. Because of their love for Him who willingly embraced His Cross, they sought to be as closely identified with Him as possible by also desiring crosses. We don’t have to speculate, we know that they found great comfort of a deeply spiritual order in the midst of their suffering.

Now obviously, none of us would be so foolish as to think we love Jesus as much as the really great saints, so is there any way that we too, lacking their degree and intensity of love, also find reason to esteem suffering as good and valuable, and thus to feel blessed and “comforted” by them?

A little while ago I mentioned in connection with the story of Poor Lazarus, and the Holy Innocents that if the suffering one has not brought upon Himself (by sinful conduct), then God automatically rewards, with no questions asked.

In the case of those who have brought sufferings upon themselves and then repent of their sinfulness, that very suffering then becomes valuable as a means of making reparation for the injury done to God by those sins, and of shortening their purgatory, or in the positive sense, hastening their purification of the stains left by those sins in their souls and as love grows through cheerfully accepting deserved punishment for sin as a means of purification, one might easily begin to want to forget their own needs, and to use those same merited sufferings to obtain the release of souls from purgatory. The amazing thing about doing that is that the love which prompted the application of sufferings to benefit others is itself a more powerful and effective means of purifying that person’s soul than the merited sufferings themselves. Really, by doing that “They can’t lose for winning” (to reverse the familiar saying).

To go back a minute to the idea of making use of sufferings, particularly that inflicted upon us undeservedly, as a gauge. The more patiently and cheerfully we can endure it, the greater our love of God. If we can really relish it and treasure it, we have attained a very high degree of love. (Of course to relish and treasure on a deeper level than the suffering.) If we find it very difficult to reconcile ourselves with pain and suffering, and go to great lengths to try to get rid of it immediately or to avoid it, then our love for God is very weak. Of course, since pain and sufferings are evils, we are obliged to use ordinary reasonable, lawful, means to overcome them. It is only after that has failed, can we deem them to be sent to us by God, and thus capable of being deemed valuable.

We can now ask ourselves: What would be examples of sufferings God might expect us to endure cheerfully and patiently (the patience would cause us to be blessed in itself alone)?

I believe they would consist of the daily, unavoidable hurts and burdens we all seem to undergo:

1. Persevering in the fulfillment of our duties and obligations at home and at work, even though we are not in the mood, or are tired and weary, and in spite of anything that makes our work unpleasant and distasteful.

2. The unjust criticisms that are directed at us, and fault-finding of other kinds, especially when the one who finds fault doesn't know the whole story or may himself be blind to similar or worse faults in himself. As Jesus says, from someone who has not first removed the plank from his own eye.

With regard to criticisms and accusations of faults and wrongdoing, Our Holy Mother St. Teresa said she found it easier to accept those that were not true than those that were accurate. She said too, that the faults she was accused of, true or not, were never as serious as her real faults, of which she was ever mindful.

3. Not being thanked for the favors we do for others, that is, when others fail to acknowledge that we have done something for them we were not obliged to do, and thus to which they had no strict right. That is, they don't seem to notice that we have done so because of our love or esteem for them. A more pronounced degree of this suffering would be the sense of being "taken for granted" and thus not worthy of recognition.

4. Another example of being taken for granted: When we are faithful and diligent in fulfilling our duties and obligations, and we do so very well, and again no one seems to notice or give a sign of approbation.

5. The annoyance and frustration we experience when things go wrong at home or at work: gadgets break down, light bulbs burn out and need to be replaced, we run into a rash of mistakes while typing, we have run out of ingredients for cooking or baking just when we need them, or run out of materials to do little repairs around the house, when we can't find the proper tool, or the proper tool doesn't work properly, and here's one most of us can relate to also: we have inadvertently lost or erased several pages of text on our word-processor, and have to do it all over again.

6. Unexpected and unwanted interruptions of our work or our leisure especially, in the case of our work, we have a deadline to meet. In the case of leisure when we are dog-tired and mentally exhausted and desperately want to rest.

7. Especially those seemingly deliberate attempts on the part of others to hurt or annoy us, or otherwise make life miserable for us.

8. The inability to make other people understand why it is we do - or don't do - certain things, and to have our good intentions and our loving deeds misinterpreted.

9. When we need a helping hand and there are people around who are free to help and capable of helping but do not seem to notice, or even worse, when they do notice but do not help.

10. When we experience helplessness on the occasions we would like to go to someone's aid but are lacking the means to do so, or if we do, our help is refused or spurned.

Perhaps the ten examples I have given seem trivial, and shouldn't be considered among those experiences that make life on earth a "valley of tears". But taken all together, and considering that many of them we do experience every day, I believe they would suffice to make us sad and weary, if we did not have the comfort of knowing they can be put to such great and effective use for the good of souls, as we have seen.

Now surely, some of you have noticed that the kind of “comfort” I have spoken of thus far is “comfort” that has been “taken” by the persons who have reason to mourn. They “take comfort” in the sense that they generate it themselves by the remembrance of those truths of our Faith we’ve already spoken of. But the beatitude does not say “Blessed are those who mourn; they will be able to take comfort”; it says “*they will be comforted.*” That can only mean that other agents will intervene to bestow the comfort. Who would these agents be? Well, obviously, God Himself, and those who love Him and are dedicated to serving His interests.

We can be confident that the Three Divine Persons dwelling within our souls bring comfort to the sorrow. When our Lord said, “*If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and My Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.*” If anyone keeps my word: Which of us has not experienced that to keep to Jesus’ Word, His commandments, necessarily involves at times suffering and deprivation for our sense and our ego as well, at times, emotional pain, if putting God first is interpreted by members of our family or other close friends as a deliberate hurt inflicted upon them. Surely at those times it is the Divine Persons themselves that give comfort, even if it is not vividly experienced.

The task of comforting certainly pertains chiefly to the Holy Spirit, since more than once in his letters St. Paul or St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles mentions the “consolation of the Holy Spirit.”

Then of course the Angels, who are dedicated to doing God’s will, can be sent to bring comfort. We read in at least one of the accounts of the Agony in the Garden that an angel came to comfort Jesus in His sufferings on that occasion, which were so severe as to cause Him to sweat blood. It might well be, too, that when we think we are “taking comfort” in the grip of some suffering that our angels are the ones who are acting upon our minds and hearts in such a way that we do find comfort in the thoughts and considerations already mentioned.

Then, last but not least, our fellow Christians are very often God’s agents in the task of comforting those who mourn. In fact, that is one of the spiritual works of Mercy: “*To comfort the sorrowing.*” It is something that is within the reach of all of us, and surely we’ve all had numerous occasions to do so and have done it, without even advertent to the fact.

Of course we can not always comfort the sorrowing by removing the evil that causes them to mourn, but we can always act and speak in such a way as to be affirming and supportive of the one who is sorrowing. In fact, anything we do or say that helps the sufferer to know that he is loved and esteemed, and to keep in mind how precious he is to us and to Our Lord is a marvelous way of bringing comfort to the sufferer.

[As an aside, there are two observations we can make concerning the spiritual works of mercy. The first is that all of them serve to remove an evil that afflicts the human soul, just as the corporal works of mercy remove an evil that afflicts a persons’ body. The second is that since Jesus promised heaven (in the parable of the last judgment) to those who performed the corporal works of mercy, and since the soul is of far greater value than the body, we can be equally sure that an even greater reward is in store for those who dedicate themselves to the spiritual works of mercy.]

Finally, a word about the meaning “to comfort.” The meaning we are most familiar with, and it is this meaning we’ve been concerned with thus far is: “*to bring relief of pain or sorrow.*” Relief would include both mitigating the pain and sorrow and removing it altogether. The less common

meaning of “to comfort” is “to strengthen” from the Latin “confortare” to strengthen with. But really, these meanings are not mutually exclusive, and most often the considerations and truths that enable the sufferer to “take comfort”, and the loving words and deeds of Christians and actual graces given by God and the Angels that serve to bring comfort, also serve to give strength to the sufferer to endure those things that cause him to mourn. Of course, the strength given is not only for enduring, putting up with. It also includes the power to transform the sufferings into spiritual treasures. A good analogy for this is found in nature. As you all know pearls come from oysters, and the pearl is the by-product or fruit of the oyster’s efforts to mitigate or remove the “pain” it experiences when a grain of sand gets into the shell and irritates its soft membranes. The substance it keeps producing to coat both the grain of sand and the insipient pearl hardens to form the finished pearl, and it is a delight to the eye. It is through the efforts to take comfort, and through being comforted that the Christian sufferer produces the spiritual valuables that can be used to redeem souls.

Fourth Conference

1. What Beatitude shall we consider next?

***Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice
(holiness) (righteousness) (uprightness), for they shall be filled.***

2. What do we mean by *hunger and thirst*?

Hunger and thirst are the equivalent of “a very intense desire.” Properly speaking “desire” pertains to the human soul, and particularly to that faculty of the human soul we call the will. The experience of “desire” in the will is due to the fact that the will has as its proper object and perfection or fulfillment (satisfaction) to be united with “goodness” or that which possesses the quality of goodness. As soon as the will is made aware of a “goodness” (or good thing or person) which it has not yet somehow assimilated to itself, it experiences “desire”. (Actually - joins it, to be animated to it/he/she).

3. What is there special about this “desire” that enables it to be compared with “hunger” and “thirst”?

The “longing” for food which we call hunger and the “longing” for water which we call “thirst” spring also from the instinct of self-preservation which God has placed in all of us. If we do not eat or drink, we will die. So, hunger and thirst for justice (holiness) (righteousness) (uprightness) can be compared to the instinct of self-preservation, so that, spiritually, we may live.

4. What then can we say is characteristic of all those things mentioned which, if we hunger and thirst for them, make us “blessed” or happy, or fortunate? (a state of being in possession of “goodness”.)

What is characteristic of them is that, once we possess them, they put our souls (our wills) into direct union with goodness. They cause us to possess the Supreme goodness, which is God.

5. What are the special meanings of all those terms: *Justice, holiness, righteousness, and uprightness*?

Considering justice as a moral virtue, it is that habitual tendency of soul to give to others what is due to them based upon what they “are” in the over-all scheme of things. As the dictionary I consulted suggests, it is *dealing fairly and squarely and honorably with everyone*.

6. What would be an example of giving everyone his/her due based upon what the person is in the overall scheme of things.

Well, let us take God as an example. He is our Creator in the Order of Nature and our Father in the Order of Grace, (without our deserving it!!) Thus we owe Him, (namely, what is due to Him from us), is that we acknowledge those facts with our minds, and that we thank Him for creating us and for making us His children by Grace. We should acknowledge His rights over us and know that union with Him alone can make us happy. Only by obedience are we able to establish union with Him. Also we should have reverence and respect for him.

What I have just said considers God as what He is in His relationship to us. We can, and should also, even first, perhaps, consider Him as what He is in Himself. Thus we acknowledge Him to be

Absolute and Perfect and Supreme and Infinite Being, or as He Himself names Himself. He who IS, since He said of Himself: I AM who AM. The acknowledgement of that fact with our minds is called adoration or worship. That is what we owe to Him.

7. Can you give an example of what we owe other human beings, that is, what is due to them from us?

Well, once again we can consider others as they are in themselves, or as they are related to us. All human beings are the image and likeness of God. Therefore, we owe every human being reverence and respect. We not only acknowledge that truth with our minds, but also act accordingly, depending upon the circumstances.

When we consider others as “related” to us, that is, when we recognize that there exists a bond uniting us, then we owe it to them to acknowledge the relationship and to act accordingly. That is, we have to think in terms of “us” and “we” rather than “me” and “I”; in terms of “our” rather than “mine”. In other words, we “owe” it to them to do for them what we would want done for ourselves. Actually, we should remember that what is good for one is good for all; what hurts one hurts all who are related to us. Of course, the closer the relationship, the more truly we are identified with another, and the stricter the obligations to satisfy the legitimate needs of others as if they were our own.

8. What would be a specific example of how we owe it in justice to supply the needs of others?

Mostly, the obligation to supply the needs of others comes into play when the other has no way of providing for his or her own needs that are essential to physical or spiritual well being. Obviously, because of the closeness of the relationship, those who are parents owe their children the care children need to grow and develop physically, mentally and spiritually. Depending upon our own means and our own closeness to the situation, we owe to those whose basic physical and spiritual needs are not satisfied, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy: *Feed the hungry, etc...., Counsel the doubtful, etc...*

9. By bringing in the notion of “works of mercy,” does that not contradict the notion of “justice”?

Not really. The notion of “justice” is merely excluded, not contradicted. Actually, only in the area of retribution for wrongdoing, atonement, satisfaction and reparation, can we speak of mercy contradicting justice. A merciful judge will exact only a small portion of the “just” retribution; a merciful creditor is able to “forgive” a debt completely. We are expected to “forgive” those who hurt us, i.e., to absolve them of any obligation to make up for any injury done to us.

But strictly speaking, in the area of wrongdoing that offends God, mercy is possible because Jesus satisfied the debt of justice owing to God. Jesus did make adequate reparation for the infinitely grievous offenses of human sinfulness. Or, in other words, God, in His mercy, found a way to satisfy Divine justice, so that He can overlook and forgive any sins and the just punishments they deserve.

10. Generally speaking, how does mercy “contradict” the notion of justice?

Generally speaking, mercy, or rather acts of mercy, flow from a heart that is truly compassionate, and concerns itself only with the “immediate need”. A heart filled with compassion, sympathy, empathy does not say: “I am not obliged to come to this person’s aid, that is the duty of his or her relatives. Or, the people who are responsible for this person, whose justice to supply the need.” Nothing like

that enters into the idea of mercy. One is moved by the very need, and hastens to relieve the suffering caused by that need. Mercy seems to flow from a capacity to “identify” with the suffering individual, and to feel that very suffering as one’s own. Thus, without compassion, mercy is impossible.

11. It sounds like you are saying that we can be “obliged” to be merciful, or rather, that it is our duty, in all justice, to be merciful. Is that correct?

Well, from what I have said, since God has been merciful to us, we owe it to others to show them mercy, and in that sense “justice” requires mercy.

12. Is it possible for us to say that this mercy of Jesus, shown in His becoming our Redeemer, was also an act of justice?

We remember that when He went to be baptized, or immersed in the Jordan, by John the Baptist, St. John was reluctant, and Jesus had to insist, saying that thus they would fulfill all justice so that He Himself saw “assuming the Role of Savior” as something He was obliged to do. We can imagine that, in view of being both God and Man, He was so vividly aware that He was the only one who was capable of satisfying the requirements of Divine Justice, and that His relationship to us as a fellow Human being, and His infinite love and compassion as a Divine Person required Him to do what was necessary to rescue us from sin and death. Thus, we can say that He “owed” it both to humanity’s desperate need and to His Divinity to be our Redeemer.

Of course, it required mercy on His part before the Incarnation to share in the decision of the Three Persons to give us a Redeemer, i.e., to put Him in the situation where it was “just” for Him to save and restore us to His Father’s friendship.

13. What is the meaning of “holiness”?

Well, it seems to me holiness means to be utterly without sin. That means to be so free of sin or fault or defect as to be incapable of doing anything that can be considered a fault, or considered reprehensible. Thus God alone is Holy because He is incapable of sin, because no matter what He does He reveals His supreme perfection and goodness.

14. We say “sin offends God” and thus does Him an injury. If God can be injured, does that not make Him less than utter perfection, that is while the injury remains?

When we speak like that it only shows how human language never can convey the utter reality that is God. Human ideas can never adequately convey the perfection of God. Besides, what is really injured is His relationship with us as Our Father. What is severed or ruptured or weakened is the bond that unites us to Him. He Himself is not injured; and really, as we said when talking about justice and mercy, our sinfulness served to evoke evidence of God’s supreme mercy and goodness and love, so that His glory is magnified. They prove His Holiness beyond the slightest doubt.

15. How do you relate what you just said to the Beatitude: *Blessed are those who thirst after holiness?*

If someone were to thirst after and hunger after a share in God’s holiness to such a degree that everything that happens to that person evokes a loving response; if when such a one were injured in

any way he/she returns good for the evil, that proves that he/she already has such a deep and permanent share in the life of God and the holiness of God as to be almost incapable of sinning. Then one is truly one with God, united to and sharing in the goodness that is Eternal Life.

16. What do we mean by *righteousness*?

According to the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, it comes from the Anglo Saxon meaning *right and wise, prudent*, and thus means doing or being in accord with what is right, i.e., upright, equitable, free from wrong or sin; virtuous.

17. Does the meaning of righteousness add anything to what we said about justice and holiness?

It seems to me that it does so only in one respect in so far as it means “virtuous”. That is because “equitable” in the definition is related to “justice” in the sense that it means “fair”, and therefore also suggests the idea of “mercy” in the sense of what is done is not “strictly due” or owed, as in the case of “justice.”

The notion of holiness is included (in the definition of righteousness) in the idea of being “free from wrong”, “free from sin.”

What the notion of “virtuous” in the definition of righteousness adds is the idea that righteousness, justice, holiness, uprightness can be acquired by dint of effort until they become “second nature”, that is, permanent habits. One is able to “train” himself or herself to respond in a manner that is free from wrong or sin.

18. If to hunger and thirst for food and drink usually results in one doing what is necessary to satisfy the need for nourishment, hunger and thirst, then hunger for the state of being virtuous would also require that one make personal efforts to acquire virtues. Is that a fair conclusion to draw?

Yes, if one’s hunger for virtue is authentic, we do begin to “train” ourselves; we do begin to try to make holiness or righteousness our habitual response to life situations.

19. In general, how does one train oneself to acquire the good habits we call virtues?

At first, we have to know very well how Jesus and the great saints responded to situations that arose in the course of their own lives. Once we have a pretty good knowledge of that we have to begin bringing our own daily conduct under scrutiny. Where we notice we do not respond in the way Jesus, who is holiness itself, would have responded, we have to force ourselves to do so until the response becomes easier and easier and eventually habitual, that is, second nature.

20. Are you trying to say we can become holy by our own efforts?

Not at all. What we were told outright by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount amounts to how He habitually reacted in certain rather common life situations (i.e. *turn the other cheek*, etc....). So we needed that help to be on the lookout for such situations. But more importantly, we are well aware that it is not enough to know how Jesus would have responded or acted to bring about imitation of Him. It requires God’s grace - both charity (sanctifying grace) and actual graces (temporary help and strength for the particular situation) in order to respond as He would have done. When we say charity, we mean not only love directed toward Jesus, but also toward the other individuals in our life

experiences. The more we love Jesus and the more we love our fellow human beings, want the best for them, the more help we will draw from that love in the process of making holiness, righteousness, justice and all goodness habitual in our lives.

21. Why do you emphasize the need for charity so strongly?

For two reasons: Because God the Father and Jesus are anxious for us to pray for an increase of charity so that they may grant us a greater degree of sharing in this Love. As we read in Scripture: *“If you, evil as you are, know how to give good things to your children when they ask, how much more will not your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit (love) to those who ask.”*

The second reason is because there are so many ways to keep the flame of Love strong in our daily lives:

1. Attendance at Mass and reception of Holy Communion;
2. Remembrance of the Passion and Death of Jesus for our redemption, i.e. remembering how much God loves us and
3. Acts of self-denial and little sacrifices.

22. Why are self-denial and small sacrifices necessary?

Because pride and self-love are the greatest impediments to an increase in charity. Once we remove those obstacles, God can grant substantial increases in His Love and can enter into deeper union with us in the depths of our souls.

23. What finally, do we mean by *“uprightness”*?

Because the literal meanings of *“upright”* are: *“erect in position or posture”*, *“erect in bearing or carriage”*, when applied to human conduct, upright means morally correct, honest and just.

Merriam-Webster says that *“uprightness”* implies an *uncompromising adherence to high moral principles*.

24. Does this word add anything to what we have said so far?

Well, by introducing the word *“honest”* it reminds us that sin is a lie, every deviation from holiness is a lie, that to be holy means to be absolutely truthful, to be in total and full accord with what is true and real.

25. What does *“uncompromising adherence to high moral principles”* imply?

It implies a tremendous love of God and of all that is good - that is, a tenacious grasp or hold on Jesus, on God, and on all that pertains to God. It suggests further that the one who has this uncompromising adherence has experienced somehow or somehow that God is indeed the absolute, supreme, lovable and only Good, and that to be separated from Him is utter and total and absolute death.

No wonder then, anyone who hungers and thirsts for justice, holiness, righteousness and uprightness is Blessed beyond comparison.

Fifth Conference

1. What beatitude do we consider today?

Blessed are they who show mercy, mercy shall be theirs.

2. What is another version?

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

3. What is the difference between “*those who show mercy*” and “*the merciful*”?

There could be only a difference in language, that is, in form of expression, in that, “*to show mercy*” seems to indicate an actual deed or act, whereas “*the merciful*” indicates a state of soul that is something permanent, not a passing act which when done, is over with.

4. Wouldn't it be impossible for someone to “perform a deed of mercy” without being merciful?

No, because we have to consider the motive behind the “deed of mercy”. Some state of soul different from merciful could be the motive that produces what looks like a deed of mercy. Only in regard to God can we say that His deeds of mercy have to proceed from His being merciful because He is INFINITE LOVE, and MERCY and is the highest expression of the LOVE.

5. In the last conference (*Hunger and thirst for Justice*), when talking about justice and mercy, you said we “owe” the corporal and spiritual works of mercy to others who have some special need that we are able to supply. To which of the two forms of expression do they belong? (to show mercy, or to be merciful)

Because the corporal works of mercy are generally such that there is no strict obligation to help a person in need, we would have to say that they proceed from the state of soul we call “merciful”. Usually mercy is shown to someone who “deserves” punishment.

6. In what sense does God “show mercy” to us, and how does His unchangeable and eternal disposition of being merciful apply to us, His human children?

Obviously, God, in justice, could inflict eternal punishment upon each and every one of us because of our personal sins, (in most cases) as well as because of the original sin we inherited from Adam and Eve. But, if we ask, He will not, because He does not have to, since He can accept instead the infinite and eternal satisfaction made by the sufferings of Jesus, which fulfilled the requirements of God's justice. When we seek His mercy, He “shows” mercy and insofar as God the Father is permanently disposed to supply our bodily, spiritual needs. But, even if we do not ask, He is merciful. We have to remind Him that Jesus has satisfied justice for all who rely on Jesus' satisfaction.

7. What is the difference between God “showing mercy” and God's “being merciful”?

One obvious difference (as we mentioned last time), is that in the act of showing mercy there is the notion of fault or guilt that requires satisfaction and that notion is absent in the case of supplying a

need; or at least it does not enter into the picture, though it might be there. A hungry person is not deserving of a punishment for offending the one who is merciful and gives food.

8. What would be another difference?

Again, it is obvious, in the first case, asking God to pardon our sins, mercy is asked for; in the other, the need is supplied without the recipient having to ask. (Although sometimes the person does ask, otherwise we wouldn't know of the need).

9. Can these two (show mercy because asked, and not needing to ask) really be distinguished in God?

Well, yes and no.

No, if we consider that right after the sin of Adam and Eve, God, of His own volition, without being asked, promised that He would give us the Woman whose Son would crush the serpent's head. Rather, He did not promise Adam and Eve, but He told the serpent that that is what would happen, and there is no indication that Adam and Eve had asked for mercy. Thus, He supplied a need that came to His attention - a need on mankind's part to be rescued from eternal death. (Merciful - full to overflowing).

But again, yes, they can be distinguished (having to ask, or not having to ask) because when Jesus was on the cross, and just retribution for all sins, original and personal, had been made, Jesus did ask "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" In that sense, God "showed mercy" and was merciful in giving us someone, unasked for, who would be able to make it possible for Him to "show mercy" in individual cases.

10. Do both of these differences show up in the two versions of the beatitude?

I think so. In the version "*Blessed are those who show mercy, mercy shall be theirs*", it is suggested that when I refrain from exacting retribution because an offender asks me for pardon (forgiveness), the just retribution God has a right to inflict on me is pardoned (forgiven) without my having to ask God for mercy.

In the version "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*", it suggests that if I supply needs when I see them, or they are called to my attention, then when I ask God for His mercy, i.e., to forgive me the debt of just retribution I owe, I can be sure He will grant it.

11. Is it possible to get some idea of what the state of soul we call merciful is like? What is it that moves a merciful person to act? to supply a need?

We can compare it to that quality of soul which causes a person to experience a kind of "pain" when he/she perceives a "damaged" creature. The state of soul is such that one instinctively wants to see things enjoying the perfection or wholeness they were intended to have by their creator; the state of soul whereby, when one is hurt by disorder, ugliness, distortion, damage, woundedness, defilement, he/she then moves to restore order, beauty, wholeness, cleanliness, perfection.

In other words, two faces of the same coin, whoever is "hurt", pained, by the perception of "evil" affecting things and strives to remove it by one's own volition and personal effort would be a person

most apt to be merciful. Another way of saying it, is that one who loves goodness and perfection in things and is moved to restore it where it is lacking, is one most likely also to be merciful.

12. What is the specific “evil” or want of due perfection or wholeness or beauty that a merciful person is moved to remove, i.e. to restore the perfection that is lacking in another person?

Obviously, it is the due perfection lacking in a human being, whether in soul or in body. Really, since human beings were created in the image and likeness of God, what truly hurts a merciful person is to see God’s image defaced or defiled, damaged or wounded.

Another way of saying it, is: a merciful person is pained by sin, hurt by sin, (not physical, but affects the body), because it is sin that wounds, defiles and can kill the human soul.

13. When we say that we are created in the image and likeness of God, don’t we apply it to everyone whether or not the person is in a state of sin?

Well, in that council held by the Persons of the Trinity when they said “*Let us make mankind in our image and likeness*” They meant mankind as he and she were first created = sinless, free of damage, enjoying friendship and intimacy with God. Therefore, strictly speaking, only those who are saints are in the image and likeness of God. Those who have rejected God and have separated themselves from Him are not actually God’s image and likeness, but they remain persons who “should be” and who “can still be” while still in this world. The rest of us are somewhere in between. We are substantially the image and likeness of God, though still not a fully perfect likeness - like a face that is not clean - but sooty and smudged, covered with foreign matter. Or like a person who instead of being neat and well groomed looks shabby, disheveled or unkempt.

14. How does mercy help to restore the image and likeness of God lost by Mortal Sin? or dulled by venial sin?

There are several ways. One is by outright forgiveness. Since forgiveness removes the sin, the offense, it likewise restores the image of God that was destroyed by mortal sin and dulled by venial sin. (But the person forgiven has to know it, it seems to me). Knowing that one is forgiven engenders love. LOVE is what God is all about.

15. But mortal sin is only forgiven by God through sacramental confession. How can my forgiveness of someone who seriously offends me remove that person’s sin?

Well I think there is a relationship between our forgiving a grievous offender and that person seeking God’s forgiveness in the confessional. Since mortal sin ruptures friendship and communion - my forgiveness restores friendship and communion. If communion is restored, the graces of the Holy Spirit shared with all who are in communion with one another in the body of Christ can exert a powerful influence on the forgiven offender. After all, Jesus did say (in a way that applied to us all): *Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, whose sins you shall retain they are retained.*

16. What is a very good reason why we should ask for the quality of mercy that enables us to forgive a serious offender and restore him/her to friendship and communion?

The very beatitude we are talking about. If we “show mercy” by forgiving when asked, God’s mercy is ours. When we forgive in our hearts even though the offender has not asked for forgiveness, then when we ask for mercy we will obtain it.

In a very graphic way Jesus taught this when He told the parable of the servant who pleaded for, and obtained, mercy and forbearance for a huge debt he could not pay, yet refused to show mercy to a fellow servant who owed him a trifling amount. We cannot hope for God’s forgiveness unless we each forgive one another from our hearts.

17. What are the other great parables of God’s mercy in the Gospels?

One is the story of the Prodigal son and his father and brother, and the other is the story of the Good Samaritan.

18. What does each teach us specifically?

The parable of the Prodigal Son teaches us how God is pained when a child of His, who should reflect His image and likeness is dead in sin, and how glad He is when the child comes back. He says: *comes back to life, was dead, and is alive*. This parable teaches us how great a confidence we should have in His merciful love.

It also teaches us, by the elder brother, how we should try to rejoice also when great public sinners are converted, and be happy to share our heritage of grace with them. If we really love God, we cannot help but be overjoyed when an image of God is restored, brought back to life. This is also taught us by the parables of the lost coin and the single sheep out of the hundred that went astray. What joy when recovered!!

The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us we should be moved to compassion whenever we see a fellow human being, still substantially an image and likeness of God, in a state of suffering, a victim who either is made to suffer by evil men, or chooses to hurt himself by sin. Mercy requires that we do all we can to relieve the suffering, and when we have done all we can in person, or can’t remain there in person to continue to show mercy - we pay others to do so as our agents. I should not say we “pay others” rather we provide the resources with which they can show mercy and supply the need in our stead.

But there is a deeper lesson to be learned from the parable of the Good Samaritan - By it Our Lord enjoins upon us the practice of corporal works of mercy as well as the spiritual works of mercy by use of the parable to explain neighbor. We are all related by our common need for God’s mercy. But - practice of mercy makes us “relatives” of God.

Another, the parable of the Last Judgment, (shows a non-merciful motive for helping the needy) mercenary, but a start.

19. How do you get the spiritual works of mercy out of that parable? (The good Samaritan)

By considering the words “leaving him half dead” in the truest, most profound sense, it refers to people “half dead in sin” - in serious danger of losing one’s soul. We are most seriously obliged to do all we can to rescue souls victimized by Satan and evil men in this world. That is what the

spiritual works of mercy do, they cause the image and likeness of God that remains in a precarious state in an individual from being totally destroyed.

20. What are the spiritual works of mercy?

1. To admonish the sinner.
2. To instruct the ignorant.
3. To counsel the doubtful.
4. To comfort the sorrowful.
5. To bear wrongs patiently.
6. To forgive all injuries.
7. To pray for the living and the dead.

21. What are the corporal works of mercy?

1. To feed the hungry.
2. To give drink to the thirsty.
3. To clothe the naked.
4. To visit the imprisoned.
5. To shelter the homeless.
6. To visit the sick.
7. To bury the dead.

Sixth Conference

1. What Beatitude do we consider today?

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.

2. What are some of the other versions of this beatitude?

Besides the expression: the *pure of heart*, we also find “clean of heart”, “single-hearted” and “pure in heart.”

3. What would be the differences in those expressions?

I think there is a difference in the way the words “clean” and “pure” are used in ordinary speech.

We always say “a clean floor” not a “pure” floor.

We always say “pure” gold; we never say “clean” gold to mean “unmixed” gold. But of course, an object made of gold can be “clean”, but clean applies to the object, not the gold it is made of.

However, there are instances when we can have “clean” water, even though the water is not “pure” because it contains dissolved salts or other substances. In any event, these can be a starting point for discussing a heart that is clean, or pure, or “single”.

4. Before we talk about the adjectives, shouldn't we talk first about what we mean by a person's *heart*?

Yes, of course. By *heart* we usually mean the seat, or center of one's affections. It refers to the faculty by means of which we love. Because it is the faculty by which we love, it is a kind of treasury, *where your treasure is, there is your heart also*.

5. What is there about the human heart that makes it an appropriate symbol of the faculty by which we love, the seat, center, or dwelling place of our affections?

The human heart is the most important organism as far as our physical life is concerned. Once the heart stops beating, the body dies, that is, the soul has no choice but to leave the body and as long as there is a heartbeat and circulation of blood, the body is considered alive, that is, the person is considered to be alive. Thus, when used to convey the affections or loves of a person, the heart is symbolic of the kind of spiritual life a person lives by. It tells us about the quality of that life, the character or state of a person's soul.

Therefore, we can truly say that, just as when the bodily heart stops beating, the body dies, so also when the spiritual “heart” of a person does not function properly, then the soul of that person dies also or is seriously ill.

But before we go on, let me point out that the word “affection”, which is another word for “love”, comes from the Latin “ad-ficere”: to cause to cling to, to connect or fasten one thing to another. It is by means of our heart, our faculty of loving that we cling to the object of our love or fasten ourselves

to (unite with) the object of our love. To speak of our affection implies we are clinging to an object of love.

6. Is there any reason why the bodily heart is a symbol of our faculty of loving?

Yes, because our bodily heart undergoes changes when we are near to or far from someone or something we love. This is especially true if something extraordinary is going to happen, or danger of something happening that could affect the relationship. We hear of a person being broken-hearted because of a lost love. Something really happens to the physical heart. The anticipation of seeing again a loved one who is coming back from war or a long absence can cause the heart to palpitate in the body of the one waiting and the one returning. It is for such reasons that the physical heart is an apt symbol for the seat of the affections and the faculty by which we love.

7. Getting back to the difference between the translations of this beatitude, how does *clean of heart* differ from *pure of heart*?

Perhaps we should try to think of clean as applying to the surface of the heart and pure as signifying the “stuff” the heart is made of. Then clean of heart would mean that there is nothing defiling the surface - and pure of heart would mean that there are no foreign substances mixed in with the “stuff” the heart is made of. (or within the heart).

8. How is it possible to think of the heart as having a surface?

Well, maybe it's better to think of the surface in terms of a shell. If there were a shell, that would keep anyone or anything from getting to the heart. So if we then say that it is “self-love” that prevents a heart from loving, then we might want to think of any and all forms of selfishness as being what defiles the surface of a person's heart.

9. Why do you say that “self-love” prevents loving?

Because true love is always “other entered”. The very concept of love requires at least two agents who love, and each is the focal point, or the center of the other, causing union. To try to substitute one's own self for “the other” brings about a total “absence” of love, i.e., a contradiction in terms, like “a square circle.”

10. But aren't we told that we are to love ourselves, that unless we love ourselves we damage our mental health and become incapable of loving others?

Actually, when we are told to have a “healthy” self-love, (the adjective is used to show we don't mean “love” in the most strict sense), we really mean: Have a high self-esteem! Be convinced of your self-worth! Thus we see that we are not talking about true love because “esteem” and “conviction” (being convinced) are the work of the intellect, not the heart. Thus, this kind of healthy self-love really focuses not on our person, as such, but upon the various aspects of our humanity. We realize that we are created in the image and likeness of God, we value the powers and the faculties of the soul, we acknowledge that only God, the Supreme Good, the Supreme Beauty, and the Supreme Truth can satisfy us, and so we are in awe of the human nature that we possess. So when we have a healthy self-love, we mean the same kind of “love” for beautiful and precious things in the sense that we don't want to see that we have broken or damaged them, and we treat them with utmost reverence, protection, and care. We may even want to place them in a setting that enhances their

loveliness. (as with diamonds or flowers). The self-love that is no love at all is that which makes one's own "person" (not nature) the "other" which true love requires. One not only fails to love, but negates one's own "personhood", for as we have had occasion to say several times already: To be a person means to be "other centered."

11. What would be another explanation of a "healthy" self-love?

Another way to have a healthy self-love is to esteem everything that pertains to our human nature, all our talents and abilities, and even our material resources, as empowering us to do good to others, particularly to enrich those we truly love, those "persons" we have taken as the "others" about whom we are centered.

12. In what ways, then, would the "surface" of the heart be "unclean?"

We could perhaps say that it would be all those forms of selfishness, which keep us from centering completely upon, or giving ourselves completely to, others in love. These would manifest themselves in being overly concerned about what we will eat, what we will drink, what will we wear, where will we find lodging, etc. It is not the same as being unwilling to focus on others as objects of love, but just being afraid that we won't be able to keep our own human nature (not our person) well provided for.

13. Based upon what you have said, when is the surface of the heart really "clean"?

Taking what I just said as a starting point, the surface of the heart would be clean when we are totally generous in giving of the resources of our nature to serve the "other". It would be absolutely clean when we are willing to be totally generous with "every other", not just the "others" whose lives are closely intertwined with our own.

14. Please explain now the idea of "pure of heart" in terms of the "stuff" the heart is made of?

Well, if we think of the heart as being composed of "gold", then only when there are no base metals mixed in would we be able to say that it is "pure".

15. But you said that the heart is the faculty of loving. In what way can the power to love be compared to "gold"?

As a faculty of loving the heart is also the faculty which achieves union. The role of love also is to bring about "transformation". So if what our hearts unite us to and transform us into is "gold", then our heart is "gold". That is, when the beloved into whom we are transformed is the purest gold, then we are "most pure of heart".

16. How do you identify the "beloved" who is pure gold?

Obviously we mean God Himself, who is deserving of all our love. When our hearts are transformed into God, then they are "most pure".

17. A little while ago you said that we are to keep the surface of our hearts "clean" by serving "every other" generously. Wouldn't that keep us from having God as our only love, and thus keep us from being "pure of heart"? i.e. A lesser love mixed with the greater love?

It seems to me that if our hearts are not clean because we are selfish and not willing to serve “every other”, then that means that we have not united ourselves to God in love completely. Therefore our hearts would not be completely pure because unless we serve every other, (Jesus came to serve everyone, not to be served); complete transformation in God would not have taken place.

18. What would the other loves be that would be competing for our hearts with God so as to have a mixture of love for God and love for others in our hearts?

I think that from what we have said about being willing to serve only some, rather than “every” other, we would have to say that, although other loves do not necessarily threaten to supplant God as our Supreme love, there can be “disordered loves”. Obviously being transformed into the pure gold which is the pure love of God, we would necessarily love everyone as God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit love everyone. But we could easily let favoritism, or being unduly influenced by the likes and dislikes of those closely related to us keep us from serving every other, as we ought. So I guess it is best to say that it is not “other” loves that a good Christian has in his/her heart contending for supremacy, but rather allowing foreign substances, dross, to contaminate our love for God. This notion lends itself very well to illustrate what we mean by Purgatory. It is that painful process of being melted down in fire (which is God Himself) so that the dross can float to the top, be utterly consumed and disappear, leaving the heart pure and transformed into God’s love.

19. At the very beginning you also spoke of the “single-hearted”. Can this be related to either the “clean” of heart or the “pure” of heart as you have described them?

It seems to be that the term single-hearted means having only one single motive or objective for everything we do or do not do. Now we have to admit that it is our loves, which furnish the motives behind our conduct. Therefore, if because of a disordered love (dross contaminating love of God in your heart), I add to the intention of pleasing and glorifying God the intention to please someone else (which is not always entirely inconsistent with pleasing God), then love of God ceases to be the single unique motive, and I am not single-hearted. If I fear there won’t be enough for my own bodily needs and thus become less than generous, I am not single-hearted. So I believe being utterly single-hearted: having only one intention, one motive, is perfectly consistent with being clean of heart and pure of heart.

20. Would there be any advantage of one of the three over the other two?

I would prefer to think in terms of single-hearted. That is because it involves the intention of the mind. Thus if I always try consciously to do all things for love of God, I am more likely to be disposed to let God do the work of purifying my heart completely, inside and out, because that is something only He can do. To be single hearted seems to be within our power (desire).

21. Would it be appropriate to say something now about the Immaculate Heart of Mary?

Well, perhaps, we should speak of how it is that God goes about purifying our hearts?

22. All right, how does God go about making us clean of heart and pure of heart?

I think it is true that as the stuff the heart is made of becomes more and more the unmixed love of God, or love for God, that is, approaches perfect charity, then the “surface” of the heart gets more and more clean, so that the heart becomes utterly pure and utterly clean at the same time.

23. You still haven't said how God does that.

It seems to me that He does so by taking away from us, or at least allowing us to be deprived for a while of, things we really treasure. In other words, He allows us to experience to some extent the pain of loss. If our love for those things is disorderly, then we experience feelings and emotions such as anger, resentment, vindictiveness, envy and the like to the extent that we lose our peace of mind and interior calm. Once we advert to the fact that we are no longer at peace, we know that the Holy Spirit (who is The Love within the Trinity) is not a part of, or shares in, our love for what it is we have lost or been deprived of.

24. What can we do to help in that purification?

We can do a lot by ourselves to purify our hearts of inordinate affection for things that gratify the senses and that is done directly by mortification of the senses. But even here, the final purification is accomplished by God by what He providentially allows to happen to us. We can do something, but not too much directly to purify our hearts of pride. About the best we can do in that regard, directly, is to mortify our curiosity and always to choose for ourselves what is less favorable or less gratifying so that the more favorable and more gratifying will go to another.

We can do an awful lot, indirectly, to purify and clean our hearts by nourishing a greater and deeper love for God: Yahweh the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. Because Jesus took on a human nature like ours, (such that we can enlist the aid of our entire human apparatus to help us love Him more); awareness of, and meditating upon, the evidence of His and the Father's love for us is the best indirect method to help in our own purification of heart.

25. Is there any other reason why we should do all we can to deepen and strengthen our love for Jesus?

The most important reason is that we need to have that kind of profound and invincible love when God in His providence sends us purifying suffering. When our love for Jesus is strong enough we begin to welcome sufferings, especially those which caused Jesus the most agony: rejection, ingratitude, contempt, insult, hatred, derision, ridicule, etc. from those He came to save, especially those upon whom He had lavished so much love - a love that is so strong that we want to share as much as we can in all Jesus did and experienced. When we find our joy in drinking from the same cup He has drained in all its bitterness, then we can endure the terrifying sufferings God sends to purify our hearts completely.

26. Let's get back to our Blessed Mother and her Immaculate Heart. How does all the discussion so far apply to her?

Well, obviously, Mary was conceived without original sin. Even the slightest stain of sin of any kind did not touch her. Thus we can say that she was always ready to be totally at the service of all others because from the beginning she was Full of Grace, completely transformed into Divine Love. Thus she, too, loved everyone as God loves everyone, and therefore, there were no disordered loves in her heart.

27. Since she was Immaculate from the moment of her Conception, how would it be possible for her to have any disordered loves?

It is correct to say that she never was in the least way disorderly in her love, but still it was possible for her to experience a kind of temptation to love in a disordered way because of her perfect humanity, her perfect motherhood. It would be natural, therefore, for her human most perfectly maternal heart to want to relieve the sufferings of Jesus her Son. She might have thought that there were people, like Judas who did not want to be saved, whom Jesus knew would willingly, knowingly, reject salvation, and so why go all the way in suffering?

Why not suffer just enough to save those whom, in the final analysis, would actually be saved? She might have thought of asking that of the Father so as to see Jesus suffer less. But she did not have that disordered love - she too, along with Jesus and the Father wanted Him to suffer the full measure, so that everyone would be able to save himself/herself if he or she chose, even those Jesus and the Father knew would reject salvation.

In doing that, joining in wishing Jesus to suffer in the fullest measure, she was also willing her own fullest possible measure of suffering, and most likely, it was by doing that that she merited to be called, (as she truly is) the co-redemptrix.

28. Are you saying that Mary's Immaculate Heart became - more pure as a result of that kind of perfectly ordered act of love?

By no means, because not even the pure love of God could possibly be purer than infinitely pure. But we can talk about "evidence" of the purity and intensity or ardor of God's love and of the most pure love in Our Lady's Immaculate Heart. By our seeing to what lengths Jesus and Mary went to try to win the salvation of all souls, to make sure that any and all souls, no matter how perverse, would be able to be saved if only they wanted to, we get to know the magnitude and the intensity of their love for us. The evidence is for our benefit.

29. Is that over and done with, i.e., Jesus and Mary giving further evidence of the magnitude and ardor of their love for souls?

Not at all. Jesus' presence in the Eucharist, daily exposed to the neglect, indifference and ingratitude of us, His human creatures, is ongoing new evidence of that immense love, as well as Our Lady's desperate attempts to get us all to save our own souls and to help her save souls most in need of mercy. (By her apparitions).

30. What is the reward promised to the pure of heart?

As you know, it is promised that *they shall see God*.

31. Is that reward reserved only for the next life?

No, even though the way of seeing God in this life is not with the eyes of the body or with the "eye" of the intellect. God is seen only with the eyes of the heart.

32. How can you justify that statement?

By the statement of St. John in his letter (I John 3, 2) “*We know that when He comes we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is.*”

Because there have been, and are, and always will be victim souls who accept the fullest possible share in the redemptive sufferings of Jesus and Mary for souls, it means they have seen Him with the eyes of their souls and have become like Him.

Seventh Conference

1. What beatitude do we consider today?

**Blessed (*happy*) are the peacemakers (*promoters of peace*),
for they shall be called the children (*sons*) of God.**

2. What do we mean by the word *peace*?

There are so many ways the word is used. Very often it means the absence of war, when speaking of nations or of factions within a nation, or the absence of hostilities between families or individuals, that is, the absence of verbal clashings or arguments as well as absence of actual fighting. So in general, peace is used very often to mean the absence of any kind of violence. Again, it can mean a “positive” way of saying the absence of violence, as when we say “peace and quiet”. It seems to mean “tranquility” in that usage.

3. Is there a definition of “peace”?

Yes, the “tranquility of order” is about the best definition I have come across, really, the only one! That would mean that where there is no external evidence of disorder, there is peace!!

4. How does “disorder” differ from confusion?

It seems that disorder and confusion are pretty much the same. We usually associate “confusion” with activity; the lack of coordinated, smooth, harmonious activity on the part of many. But we also speak of “disorderly” conduct as when one person causes some kind of a disturbance. Still we speak of “disorder” in the sense that a room could be in disarray or one’s possessions (books, or for example, clothes closet) could be in disarray. But in the latter cases, we don’t think of peace being lacking. But perhaps strictly speaking, peace has to do with orderly conduct. We also speak of peaceful relationships, but also in regard to conduct or comportment.

5. What then, would be the definition of peace-maker?

A peace-maker would be one who restores order, specifically orderly conduct and harmonious relationships and activity.

6. Does the beatitude have in mind one who restores order in all of society or one who restores order (peace) between individuals?

There doesn’t seem to be a limitation in the beatitude itself, but because they are so few who are able to affect all of society, and since the beatitudes apply to everyone, we would have to say that it has in view establishing peace between individuals or among small groups of individuals. However, those who bring about peace on a large scale are therefore blessed to a very high degree.

7. What are the major causes of disorder or hostility involving individuals or groups of individuals?

It seems to me that all disorder or hostility ultimately boils down to a “clash” of wills. Each person wants his will (or his way of doing things) to prevail over another’s. Or, groups of people who agree

on something want their “way” to prevail over some other group’s way of doing things. If things just can’t be both ways at once, then there is struggle, strife, contention and perhaps even violence.

8. Does a clash of wills always result in some kind of struggle, even if outright violence does not occur?

I think so. Usually when two people disagree on something - especially on the best way to accomplish something they both desire, they use reasons to explain their position and try to convince the other to embrace one’s own way! That would be an intellectual struggle.

Again, when there is a clash of wills about how to proceed in a given situation, often, at least in democratic countries, the will of the majority prevails.

9. What would be the reason why in some cases, a clash of wills does lead to physical violence?

In those cases, one party would be trying to impose his or her will upon the other by means of force, and of course, the other would resort to force to escape having the will of the other prevail.

10. Does that happen very often?

Probably not between friends or between people who are of “good will” in dealing with others. But when we think of all the violent crime that is rampant in our midst, we would have to say that it does happen often. And speaking of crime, there are so many forms of “white collar crime” and so many ways of breaking the law without calling attention to oneself, that we are not aware of how often people impose their own will upon that of the law abiding citizens, who choose the law as their own will.

11. Is it possible to have “different” wills on the part of two or more individuals, and yet not have a “clash” of wills?

Yes, we see that happening all the time. People use different brands of products, use their spare time in different ways, dress and furnish their homes according to different styles, but there is no real clash of wills.

12. What is there about the above that doesn’t occasion a real “clash” of wills?

In all of the above examples, it is only a question of “personal taste”. In matters of personal taste there is no such thing as “right” or “wrong”. That is to say morally right or wrong. we can only talk of “right” or “wrong”, “good” or “evil” in regards to matters that touch upon what is most dear and important to us, things that involve our very being, our ultimate happiness. It seems to me that a “clash” of wills occurs only in those situations where one of the individuals involved senses that his/her very “identity” is at stake, that his or her very person or essence as a human being could suffer harm.

13. Could you give an example of what you mean?

About the best and easiest example to understand is that of two men (why not women) fighting a duel. (Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr). The existence of each one is perceived as a monstrous affront to the other. So one has to die. The one is perceived as a total denial and a total negation of

everything the other believes in, stands for and identifies with. Also, Jesus and religious leaders (chief priests, Pharisees, and Scribes.

There are other less vivid examples, but still involve the notion of what a person is or stands for matters so important that a state of affairs could be considered to be a denial and a negation of what he/she personally identifies with. One such example would be the militant pro-abortionists and the militant “gays” and “lesbians”. It would appear that these groups are so identified with the concept of utter and total sexual permissiveness that the very idea that the natural law, the right of another person, even God’s rights over the human body obliges them either to cease their sexual practices or admit their sins as interpreted as a threat to their very existence.

14. Could there be an example of a clash of wills where both sides really believe that God Himself is on their side?

Of course, the best example of that is the religious wars of the past. But there have been others, notably the example we have in the struggle between capital and labor within the last hundred years. Representatives of capital cite the God-given rights of ownership and the representatives of labor cite the God-given right to just compensation for services. And very likely, most ordinary clashes of wills that occur in daily life are of this kind. Both sides really do think that they are in the right.

15. What then, what would be absolutely essential in order to avoid a clash of wills, and therefore to establish peace? Well, there is the false solution and the true solution. The false solution is to try to convince everybody that “everything” is a question of mere personal taste, that there is no such thing as right or wrong. There is no such thing as sin. But of course, that would be impossible in practice, even if everyone ascribed to it in theory, because people are bound to be hurt in one way or another when others are allowed to do anything they please.

The true solution, then, lies in seeing that there are certain ways of acting, certain ways of living and conducting ourselves that not only do not hurt or do violence to others, but which actually “promote” the good of all. That is to say, since we cannot help “willing” and “wanting” what we perceive to be “good” for us, we need to find a way of seeing that when we do what is “good” for others, we are doing what is “best” for us personally. We have to see that in some ways we are all identified with another, and that we are all so profoundly inter-related that everything one does has an effect for good or evil upon everyone else.

16. That sounds a lot like what communists and socialist teach, that the good of the people is paramount, and that each individual among the people exists for the good of all. How can you avoid coming to that conclusion?

Communists and socialists use force and violence to compel the individuals to exist only for the good of the people. Socialists and communists do not hesitate to sacrifice individuals, even kill them, if they think the individuals are not contributing to the good of all. That is not the same as each person seeing and embracing with mind and heart his or her identification with all other human beings and willingly “being” and “doing” for the “good of all”. There would be no force or violence used on the part of superiors, nor would any individual have to be sacrificed in the true solution.

17. Is there a way of bringing that about?

As Catholics, we know that there is. We know there is such a thing as the mystical Body of Christ. We Catholics know that by Baptism we became members of Christ, we are members of one another. We know of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, which means that all who are members of Christ really are affected by what each and every other member does, and that each one affects all the others, and that there are members who are on earth, in Purgatory and in Heaven. That is because we all live by the same spirit, the Holy Spirit, who is the “soul” of the mystical body.

18. How does a person develop a profound awareness of the doctrine of the Mystical Body and the Communion of Saints?

Well, because we know of these mysteries, or rather, accept them only by faith, whatever helps us to grow in faith helps us to appreciate those mysteries. The two most obvious ways to deepen our faith is first of all, to live what we believe, and second to ask daily for an increase of faith.

But more directly, we can appreciate those mysteries better by meditating upon the fact of the “solidarity” of the human race, which is also part of the Doctrine of our Faith revealed by God in Holy Scripture. We know, for example, that the sin of Adam and Eve affected the entire human race. It was their disobedience that brought about the pitiable plight of all humanity, and we know also that it was the obedience of Mary and Jesus, the new Eve and the new Adam that overcame the evils caused by the Original Sin. So if there were no such thing as an inter-connectedness and inter-relatedness of all human beings, the universal effects of both the original sin and the Redemption would not be possible. So if we are all “of one another” from the natural point of view, imagine how much more so we are “of one another” as a result of Divine Grace.

19. How, then, does one become a peace-maker?

If we agree that the only way to bring about peace is to bring about unity of wills in every respect, which is to say, to bring about a merger of interests, then one way to bring about peace is to preach the Faith, to work for the growth of the church, or as Jesus said Himself, “*Go, make disciples of all nations.*”

But since the best way to “preach” any doctrine is to “live” the doctrine, one becomes a peacemaker by treating everyone as if he/she were treating oneself. Or better because we don’t tend to be preoccupied with ourselves, we neglect ourselves in so many ways, we have to treat others as if we were treating Christ Himself.

20. Where does one get the motivation to be a peacemaker?

Although we can talk about and be convinced in our minds that there is a solidarity of all human beings with one another, especially among baptized Christians, a true sense and experimental knowledge comes only with love. It is love that really causes one to be identified with his/her beloved.

21. Since peace is achieved by taking away all clashes of wills, how do we decide what will should be the will of everybody?

If we had asked, Whose will should be the will of everyone, it would have been immediately evident that that Will is God's Will. Even the human will of Christ was perfectly one with the Divine Will, which will He also shared with the Father and the Holy Spirit. When everyone does God's Will, there is perfect peace. (As when we spoke of society "collapsing" because God's Will is not done).

22. If that is so, then one could be a peacemaker by just keeping the Ten Commandments. Isn't that a valid conclusion?

Yes, it is. However, just making known the Ten Commandments was not enough to bring peace to all mankind. It seems that not everyone who knew about them tried to keep them, and those who wanted to and tried to found they could not. So something had to be done to obtain the power to not only want to do God's will but to actually carry it out, and that something is also a part of being a peacemaker.

23. How would you describe that other something?

I would describe it as overcoming the state of enmity that existed between God and the entire human race. Once the bond of friendship had been broken by original sin, there was no way that a human will could be fully united to God's will until that friendship was restored. In other words, the stain of original sin was itself the barrier. Of course, we know that it was Jesus as Redeemer and Our Lady as co-redeemer who obtained forgiveness of the guilt of original sin.

24. What you are saying is that Jesus is the Peace-maker without equal, and Mary, His mother was His close collaborator as peacemaker. Isn't that so?

Yes. Peacemaking has a lot to do with overcoming sin. Even though earlier we spoke of how opposing parties - people or groups of people whose will clashed with that of other people or groups - often both feel that God is on their side, we still have to admit that human sinfulness remains, and always will remain, the great obstacle to peace and harmony among peoples.

25. What then, is another way to be a peacemaker, in addition to keeping the commandments and loving others, or better as if the other were Christ Himself?

A third way would be to work at taking away sin in the way Jesus did - of course, on a much lesser scale. Jesus was able to satisfy for all sins, not only Original Sin but all actual sins. Therefore, all one has to do to have friendship with God restored is to repent of one's sins and ask forgiveness. Then forgiveness is granted and the power to keep the commandments and identify with others is granted.

26. If Jesus had done it all, how can we be peacemakers and satisfy for sins as He did?

Because St. Paul says that he *filled up in his own body the sufferings that were lacking in the sufferings of Christ*, we know that somehow we can overcome the sinfulness of others - as sinfulness was overcome in ourselves - to enable them to accept God's friendship offered through Christ. In other words, one may make sacrifices and offer unavoidable sufferings to earn for others the grace to be converted and the grace of repentance and the grace to seek reconciliation with God. Then, too, one can make satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to sin, but that helps mostly the souls in purgatory. Still, by helping them to be perfectly united to God, in Beatific Vision, that is a kind of peace-making too!

27. Is the peace spoken of here possible, practically speaking, only in relatively small societies, or is it possible for all of world society?

Certainly we can expect to find the peace we speak of in smaller segments of world society, such as the family, parishes, religious communities, associations like the Knights of Columbus and other fraternal organizations, but even there, the main obstacle to peace is sinfulness. Still, since Jesus has given us the church as the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, the only way to achieve perfect global peace is to see everyone converted to Christ and utterly faithful to Him in and through the church. That would be the coming of the Kingdom of God in its perfection on earth.

28. Then, whenever we act in such a way to build up the church and to share in the church's mission to the nations, we are really being peacemakers, are we not?

Yes, absolutely, and since Jesus the Incarnate Son of God came to begin that work by giving of Himself totally in His Redemptive sacrifice, all of which is available through the Sacraments, and by His doctrine, when we cooperate in furthering that work, we like Him, deserve to be called the sons (i.e. children) of God.

Eighth Conference

1. What Beatitude do we consider today?

The one that immediately follows the one about peace-makers, namely:

Blessed are those who suffer persecution in the cause of right; the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

2. Are there any variant versions?

Yes, the New American version, which is used in our Lectionaries: it reads: *Blest are those persecuted for holiness sake; the reign of God is theirs*, and the Confraternity version says: *Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

3. What would be the significant differences in the expressions: “*in the cause of right*”; “*for holiness sake*” and “*for justice sake*”?

It seems to me, that the phrase: “*in the cause of right*” suggests the idea of a “public campaign” or a “public trial”. It gives me the impression that what is true, right, and good is being suppressed by someone in authority and the person who is blessed struggles, makes efforts to prevent that from happening. (Example: The Pro-Life Movement struggles against heretical doctrines.)

The phrase: “*for holiness sake*” seems to me that the blessed person is intent upon preserving personal holiness, or at least upon achieving personal holiness, and refuses to yield to any force or threat of force and even actual violence in order to preserve or attain holiness - i.e. to refuse to sin.

The phrase “*for justice sake*” seems to me to convey the notion that, in a particular case or situation, the blessed person struggles or makes efforts to see that justice is served, justice is done.

4. Why do we have at least these three versions?

Probably because each group of translators had a discussion about the best way to translate the original versions in Greek and Latin, and so these distinct meanings would surely be included in the Greek and Latin originals. (Richer in content, fuller meaning)

5. Is it possible to state this beatitude in a way that includes them all?

Well, I looked at the Latin version that has come down to us from the centuries and it has the expression “*propter justitiam*” which could be translated “*on account of justice*”. Of course, justice is a wider term which embraces the notions of “holiness” and right.

6. How does this Beatitude differ from all those that precede it?

All the ones that precede, with the exception of the one just before this one, about peacemakers, and that about being merciful are concerned exclusively about the blessed person’s state of soul: *poor in spirit, meek, pure of heart, being hungry for justice, being sorrowful*. The one about peacemakers concerns an achievement in one’s surroundings, and the one about mercy, as we saw, is concerned about not only the state of soul called merciful but also doing merciful deeds. This one about

persecution has to do with the blessed person being the object of or the target of actions or deeds on the part of others. It is about what one is made to suffer by human agents who act directly upon the blessed person.

7. Does persecution always involve suffering?

The American Heritage dictionary gives two meanings for the verb to persecute:

1. *To oppress or harass with ill-treatment, and*
2. *To annoy persistently, to bother.*

and it reminds us that the word persecute comes from the Latin word meaning to pursue. Therefore, it always involves suffering of one kind or another.

8. What element in the two meanings given seems to be missing, considering that “persecute” comes from the Latin word to “pursue”?

The important element is that the persecutor is after the persecuted one and wants to maltreat him. Therefore, it includes the notion of hatred, which means to desire that harm befalls another. It is really an intense hatred, which goes from merely desiring to see another person suffer harm to actually making attempts to inflict harm.

9. Why is it important to know this aspect of persecution, namely, that it is done deliberately, and that it proceeds from hatred?

Actually, a person can experience persistent annoyance and bother because of someone, but the one causing it might not be doing so on purpose or out of hatred. A young child may persistently annoy and bother his parents, not because of hatred but because he knows, or has, no one else to turn to in order to satisfy a felt need. Also, we remember the parable of the woman who bothered and annoyed the unjust judge who refused to do her justice and indeed, our Lord told that parable in conjunction with prayer so that we would annoy and bother Our Heavenly Father seeking what we need for our souls and the souls of those we love - *knock, seek, ask...* with persistence.

10. Is it “really” true that the persecution inflicted upon the blessed one always tries to get that person to sin? We said: resist persecution, force, and violence that would divert from pursuing holiness, refusing to sin.

No, not necessarily, often times the blessed one, because he/she is already holy or just or working in “the cause of right” are deemed to be a reproach to others who want to do wrong, to those who do not want to be reminded that their conduct is contrary to God’s will or the rights of others. Therefore, that would be another meaning of the Beatitude: -because one is holy, one is persecuted. In our conference on peace makers, we said that, as in the case of Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, one person is such an “affront” to the other, that the very existence of the other is a denial of all that the one stands for. The evil one, (or if both are evil, in that situation, each), then tries to destroy the other. We can see Jesus in this!! Blessed are those who suffer persecution because they are holy!

11. Is it possible for a really holy person to deem the existence of a sinful person as a personal “affront”?

Not at all. A truly holy person is deeply grieved by sin and by the existence of hardened sinners, but does not desire the death of the sinner nor desire any harm to befall the sinner. This has to be, because a really holy person shares in the very love of God Himself, who desires not the death of the sinner, but that he turn from his evil ways and live.

12. Does that remain true even if a hardened sinner persecutes a holy person?

Of course. Because that is typical of Jesus, who died on the cross because of the hatred of His persecutors, since a truly holy person lives by the life and love which is Jesus.

13. Is that the Blessedness (Happiness) that is promised to those who suffer persecution for justice sake?

I think so, because nothing pleases a true lover more than to resemble the beloved and to share the lot of the Beloved. Moreover, to see that all others love the beloved and help the lover to love the Beloved as much as He deserves, (if possible) is also a tremendous source of joy to the lover. And, also, nothing pleases a lover more than to fulfill all the desires of the Beloved. So, since being persecuted and made to suffer unjustly by malicious persons has a redemptive value to save even the persecutors and to bring it about that Jesus is loved and has the joy of seeing souls saved. This has to be a cause of tremendous joy and satisfaction to a holy person, who then considers himself or herself the most fortunate, the most blessed person in the entire human race because treated as Jesus was, and responds as Jesus did.

14. Going back to the different versions, how does it happen that one is *persecuted in the cause of right*?

It seems to me that to be persecuted in the *cause of right* one would have to be making some effort to call attention to error and evil that afflict society in general and then make the corresponding effort to replace error with truth, and to replace evil with good. Then it would become evident to those who are trying to impose their own errors and evil upon society, who they are who want truth and goodness to prevail, and these latter become the targets of the ill-will and malice of the former.

15. How would something like that come about?

Most likely because a good, holy person, say a mother or father, learns that his/her child is being exposed to lies and immoral conduct in school, things that do grievous harm to the child's conscience, things that could easily lead the child into serious sin. The parent would then, out of love for the child, for his salvation, out of love of God, out of love of truth and good, would object and protest against the scandal to the child and root that evil out of the child's life.

16. In other words, there is no lack of opportunities for holy people in this day and age to campaign in the cause of right and good, and so be able to share the blessedness and happiness promised by this Beatitude?

Really, one doesn't have to think of himself or herself as being holy before entering upon such a campaign. It is enough to have a deep and sincere love for the ones who are harmed by widespread

error and bad example, especially for children to be willing to make diligent efforts in the cause of right. That should be true of parents, Catholic parents, at least.

17. What about the evils in society such as abortion, pornography, AIDS attempts to get people to accept homosexuality as something good and normal?

It seems to me that in order to struggle to root these evils out of society, one would have to be a real saint, because the problem is so enormous, so widespread, and the resistance of those who want these evils is so great that one would almost have to devote every moment of the day and every ounce of energy to the task.

18. What can one do who is not free to get personally involved in such a struggle?

No matter who we are, we can always speak the truth whenever we hear error being proposed for acceptance, and in particular we can always pray and suffer - make sacrifices that God will raise up holy people to spearhead this holy struggle, and as Carmelites to pray and make sacrifices for Bishops and priests who really should be in the forefront of those working in the cause of right. If we can obtain from God the gift of holy Bishops and holy priests, half the battle is won.

19. What kind of prayer and sacrifice is more effective in this regard?

I think those asked of us by Our Lady - the Rosary, perfect fidelity to the obligations of our state in life, fasting on bread and water, and the practice of making holy hours before the Blessed Sacrament exposed. In other words, all those things she asks for that she says will enable her to save souls and cause her Immaculate Heart to triumph.

20. How does the beatitude we have just considered differ from the next and final one, which also speaks of persecution? (Really an explanation of “persecute”)

The next beatitude states: ***“Blest are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice for your reward in heaven is great.”*** (from the Lectionary).

Here, what causes the insult, persecution and slander is not right, or justice or holiness, but Jesus that provokes the slander, the insult, the persecution.

21. Isn't this the same as saying “because of justice and holiness and right (or truth)”, because Jesus is incarnate truth, justice and holiness?

It is possible to say that, but I do believe that there is also a real difference between the two. That is, it is often necessary to struggle for right, justice and holiness without mentioning the name of Jesus, that is, by trying to establish them on the basis of ethical principles or considerations. In other words: based on reason and the natural law, or even out of considerations of mere human compassion. Even these suffice to provoke persecution on the part of malicious evildoers, who reject argument and reason and who simply insist that they have a right to do what they want because they want to do it, that is, in the name of a human freedom that is utterly unrestricted, regardless of who gets hurt.

22. When would it be necessary to mention the name of Jesus?

Personally, I believe it is always necessary, because the name of Jesus makes us realize that there is a force and a power at work in the world which is the cause of all error and evil and suffering, and that power and force has been overcome and vanquished by Jesus' redemptive death and His teaching. Unless we acknowledge that power and force, which is Satan, all reasoning, all appeal to ethical considerations and to human compassion are bound to fail.

23. What is another reason why the name of Jesus should be mentioned? That is, why we should identify ourselves as His disciples, as identifying ourselves with Him?

If we do this, very quickly we will discover who of those who promote error and evil are acting in good faith, and who are acting in bad faith. That is to say, some good people can let a false notion of love and compassion deceive them into thinking certain forms of immorality are O.K. because allegedly, they diminish human suffering, although I also think that these are in the minority. The rest of the champions of error and evil are not of good faith. They are, like Satan, too proud to submit to anyone. They will not serve. It is this type of person who persecutes Christians, good Christians because they are of Christ. These persecutors hate Jesus, and want to harm Him in His members, and to harm His Church.

24. What is another cause of rejoicing when one is insulted, slandered, and persecuted for identifying with Jesus, in addition to the great reward in Heaven?

The fact that Jesus adds: "*For so it was that they treated the Prophets.*" The prophets were the voice of God calling the people of Israel to repentance, reminding them of the laws and ordinances of God, reminding them of the great mercy of God, of His intense desire to bring them back to Himself, to save them. The mere fact, then, of identifying with Jesus, (which includes being faithful to His teaching and example) is what makes of a sincere devout Christian a prophet in his own lifetime, and a light to the world.

25. From all that has been said, it would appear that hardly anyone in our western society is blessed according to these two beatitudes about persecution. Isn't anyone struggling for right and holiness in our times? Isn't anyone making it known that he/she is "of Jesus" to those he or she deals with daily?

I would hesitate to say that this is true. In order to find out whether that kind of conduct does attract persecution, we would have to be doing that, all those things, ourselves. Perhaps I, personally, need to start publicly struggling to make truth and goodness prevail in order to learn what forms the persecution takes. And also, I do believe that good Christians do exist in relatively large numbers who do make it known to those they work with and deal with in the marketplace that they are "of Christ", and they could tell us what forms of subtle persecution, insult and slander they encounter. I am sure that most of you have experienced it yourselves, and you can give witness in that regard.