

PART TWO
BEATITUDES

Cultivating the Attitudes of Jesus

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“We were put in this world to love [God] and our neighbors. Everything else passes away, only this remains. The tragedy we are experiencing summons us to take seriously the things that are serious, and not to be caught up in those that matter less; to rediscover that life is no use if not used to serve others.

For life is measured by love.”

(Pope Francis, Palm Sunday homily, April 5, 2020)



PART 2: BEATITUDES

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INTRODUCTION

SENT TO SERVE is a sharing process for small groups designed to address one of the most important needs that Catholic parishes have today—how to help Catholics accept their baptismal role to be missionary disciples.

Church leaders at all levels, including the Pope, have spoken about the importance of a vibrant, joyous, confident attitude on the part of Catholics, an attitude that can move seamlessly into appropriate conversation and sharing with others, into respectful and tactful invitation and engagement. Although Catholic life provides many resources for shaping missionary disciples, this reality still goes largely unappreciated by most Catholics and, unfortunately, by many Catholic parish leaders.

SENT TO SERVE has three parts, each designed to enhance an aspect of Catholic life and each reinforcing the other parts. Over the course of this process in discipleship, Catholics will be exposed to the major elements of their Catholic experience in a way that brings to consciousness how their lives can be shaped in greater service to the Gospel.

SENT TO SERVE provides an accessible way to help Catholics acknowledge, reclaim, and activate the graces for being missionary disciples. Through the three parts of the program, Catholics can grow in their relationship with other Catholics, advance in their following of Jesus and response to his Spirit, and reflect on the kinds of actions they can do in their daily life to serve the vision of Jesus Christ.

Part 1, ENCOUNTERS, provides a way for Catholics to think about people who have been called by God and how their experience gives direction for our experience as well. The biblical figures chosen for reflection and discussion are figures that Catholics hear about in the Scripture readings on Sundays and in their ordinary prayer life. **ENCOUNTERS** provides the biblical framework to reinforce the theological reality that every Catholic has been called by Christ in the Spirit.

Part 2, BEATITUDES, develops the attitudes that shape Catholic actions. Each session offers a particular perspec-

tive on the various Beatitudes so that Catholics can begin to learn the inner vocabulary of discipleship—and how this inner vocabulary allows for growth in our ability to live and share our faith more fully.

Part 3, SACRAMENTS, looks at the Sacraments that we celebrate as empowerments of missionary action, helping Catholics to see that the sacramental reality we live is not just for our inner sanctification but also for our missionary engagement with the world around us. Reflection on the Sacraments ties together the call we have received and the gifts the Spirit has given us so that we can live more fully the priestly, prophetic, and kingly vocations we have received. As priests, we all pray and worship on our behalf and on behalf of all. As prophets, we all hear and reflect God's Word active in our lives. As kings, we all shape our world to be responsive to the vision of the Kingdom that Jesus gave us as a living legacy.

Whether your group meets in person or virtually, **SENT TO SERVE** is designed to create awareness of yourself as a disciple and acceptance of the implications of being called through interpersonal, communal expressions that reinforce the discipleship-reality of Catholic life. Each session has three elements: welcome, sharing, and hearing the Scripture; then discussing the lesson and video; finally more intimate sharing, prayer, and a song. Together these elements help create the relational dynamics that can amplify our Catholic awareness of how we are called, empowered, and sent to serve as followers of Jesus.

Note to Group Leader: Videos are available on the DVDs in the "Parish Pack." The videos might be found from other sources by searching online, but online availability cannot be guaranteed.

You will see that we include resources outside our Catholic sphere, both video presentations on YouTube from renowned Christian preacher Rob Bell and adapted meditation exercises from Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. Perhaps some Catholics might feel a little uncomfortable about this, but seeing these powerful reflections provides a model for the kinds of ways we are all invited to delve into the Scriptures and our own experience and to find meaning that illuminates life—especially our Catholic life!

WELCOME TO ALL!

Life is indeed “measured by love.” We are so pleased that you and your group have gathered together to “ask, seek, and knock” (Mt. 7:7-8) for the life-changing ideas and practices of the Beatitudes of Jesus. With these sessions, we take seriously Jesus’ example of self-emptying love, the way of mercy and compassion, and the call to proclaim the Gospel in our lives. As St. Francis of Assisi famously said, “Proclaim the Gospel and, if necessary, use words.” That is what we all are to be about, the practical infusion of the Beatitudes into our everyday living. And so we begin open and excited...



SENT TO SERVE



PART 2: SESSION 1

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Welcome, Introductions & Scripture

Welcome! We are glad you are here! Come in, have a seat in the circle, and help yourself to some food or drink.

Let’s learn each other’s names through “The Name Game.”
(5 minutes) **BLN 1**

Opening Activity (10 minutes)

The Group Leader may facilitate the experiential learning activity for this session—“Open Bowl.” **BLN 2A**

Scripture: Luke 5:3-7 (5 minutes)

Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.” When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking.

Take a few moments to reflect, and, if you feel moved, share a word or phrase that stood out for you from this passage.

Group Reflection (5 minutes)

Read aloud the following paragraphs (one person or participants one paragraph after another)

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel is the first extended proclamation of Jesus to his followers. He intends to show them the basic attitudes needed to be his followers.

“Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What if we looked at the phrase “poor in” a little differently and spelled it “pour-in” spirit? This small change in spelling helps us get to the heart of this Beatitude. When we have a “pour-in” spirit, we make our spirits open so that we can be “poured into” by God and others. The personal results of this kind of disposition are the Fruits of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-23 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control). When we see the emptiness in our hearts, our poverty because of our need for God, then God can fill that emptiness.

Think of a faucet. When you turn it on (open it), water flows in abundance. When a faucet is closed, no water can flow. Our spirits are like this! When we are open, we allow the Kingdom of God to be poured into us. It is poured into us so we can, in turn, pour it into the lives of others we encounter. The Fruits of the Spirit come from God so that, in turn, we use these new attitudes in relationship with others!

We, as modern people, are astonished by the simplicity and starkness of this message—“How are the poor blessed”? This question arises in all our minds because so much of our activity today is to gain and secure financial stability. Stock markets. Portfolios. Banking accounts. Our culture is all about these concerns today.

But the idea of being “poor” wants to cut deeper into our spiritual awareness. This Beatitude asks us what we should ultimately rely on in our lives. Do we not all know very wealthy people who are miserable? We likewise know powerful people who end up quite isolated.

What is Jesus asking of his disciples? That we understand that we cannot secure our lives by wealth and comfort. Rather, God has to be the basic wealth of each of us; to be “poor” is to be open to God’s action in our lives and to recognize our fundamental dependency on God, our need to have God’s life poured into us.

Video: Open (Rob Bell | NOOMA) (15 minutes) **BLN 3**

As you watch the video, be attentive to any thoughts, feelings, or insights you experience.

Questions for Large Group Discussion (15 minutes)

1. How does changing the spelling of “poor” to “pour-in” enhance your understanding of this Beatitude?
2. How much of our energy goes into being financially secure? How much into being of service to others? What would we prefer for our lives?
3. How has your experience of God freed you up to serve others? In what ways have you encountered others because of your openness (pour-in attitude) to God?

Small Group Discipling (15 minutes)

In clusters of two or three, share some ways that this new understanding of the Beatitude has opened your eyes toward mission. How might you, and our parish, be more open to reaching out to others?

BLN 4

After each person has shared, the Group Leader will facilitate a discussion of what each group learned or had in common.

BLN 5

Prayer (10 minutes)

You are invited to speak of the various kinds of poverty we find around us—in society, in the Church, in our personal lives—and to offer a prayers of intention in response.

At the conclusion of the prayer, we will spend a few moments reflecting on our **Call to Action** for this week. (Write your thoughts in the space provided.)

How can I live having a “pour-in” Spirit and trusting God more fully in my life this week?

Song: Open My Eyes (Jesse Manibusan) **BLN 6**

Let us go forth, offering each other the Sign of Peace, and enjoy a time of hospitality, fellowship, food and drink.

For next session: Please bring an object that, for you, symbolizes meekness.

Holy Homework: Meditation/Breathing Exercise (optional)

Try this breathing meditation several times at home during the week following this session.

Inhale, affirming, “I have a pour-in spirit.”

Pause.

Exhale, affirming, “I am open to all!”

Repeat several times.



INTRODUCTION TO PART 2: BEATITUDES

The Beatitudes refer to statements at the beginning of the fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, statements with which Jesus opens the long discourse we call the "Sermon on the Mount." These statements express, in a compressed way, values that should characterize the followers of Jesus. Jesus uses ways of stating things from Jewish tradition to express his message.

The Beatitudes refer to the "blessed," positive attitudes that Jesus teaches his disciples. The first word in each of the Beatitudes is "blessed," but its meaning is much more fully described with words such as "happy" or "blissful" or even "ecstatic"! The Blessed are favored in the eyes and heart of God. Living these Beatitudes as attitudes of being ("be-attitudes"), we make the reign of God present in our midst.

When we live these Beatitudes, we are taking a risk. When we come to understand and experience the ramifications of the Beatitudes, we will be putting people and relationships first, rather than wealth or popularity. Your life direction will change. People might put you down when someone hurts you and you don't get even. People might call you crazy for protesting war and the outrageous military budget. People might scoff when you say, "Love your enemies."

But Jesus says that God will bless us when we take these risks. When we follow God's direction, God's meaning will become more apparent in our lives. When we face our pain and mourn, we will be comforted. When we choose mercy and world peace, God will give us strength to forgive and to stand publicly against violence. The more we live in total trust in God, the more God's values and blessings will become transparent in our lives.

These attitudes that Jesus enjoins on us actually come from the encounters he has with us. When Jesus calls and engages us, he shows us the "inner heart" of God, that is, the way God's love and life work in terms of creation and human existence. Having explored various kinds of encounters in Part 1, the Beatitudes give us an opportunity to see some implications of what it means to encounter Jesus.

So, take a risk as you listen and explore the relational implications of living the Beatitudes.

Let the adventure begin!

Group Leaders will find notes for leading these sessions beginning on page 15 of this booklet. These Leader Notes, and video links, are also available at www.pemdc.org/sent.