



Roots & Wings

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Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.

The first beatitude is the foundation of our call to be disciples of Christ. We cannot be true followers of Christ unless we are poor in spirit. According to St. Augustine, to be poor in spirit is to fear the Lord. This means being *humble* in the awesome presence of God and aligning our minds and wills with Him (*Sermon on the Mount*). It is renouncing the false illusions and exaggerated beliefs we have of our own

abilities. Being poor in spirit doesn't call us to be materially poor, and it does not refer to feeling sad. This beatitude is not a call to help the poor, and it is not a call to make people feel better. *Poverty in spirit is making God the center and foundation of our lives in everything we do.* This is the beginning point of our relationship with God—with the gift of reverence for God, we can honor and love Him above all else. With this wisdom of seeing God as the center of our lives, we are then ready to learn about and participate in the kingdom of God. Therefore, as our relationship with God grows, we participate more fully in the Kingdom of God.

This beatitude confronts the sin of pride, which is putting oneself before God. In his discussion of the Beatitudes, St. Augustine asks "who does not know that

the proud are spoken of as puffed up, as if swelled with the wind?" (*Sermon on the Mount*). There are many times when we too are "full of hot air" or act as if we are "all that." Pride therefore is putting our will before God's. It is the lust for power and control over ourselves and others, which interferes with our relationship with God.

Not only can we reflect the first beatitude in terms of our own spiritual journey, we can also think about it in terms of our community. The "poor in spirit" can refer to those who are empty or rejected in this world. Poverty in spirit can pertain to those who experience material poverty as well as spiritual or moral poverty. The materially poor experience the injustices of the world, and thus understand how much they need God's help and trust in Him. Other forms of poverty include illness, loneliness, aging, all of which point to the fact that we are dependent on God. Individuals who experience these struggles are not full of pride, and are more able to make God the center of their lives without the burdens of abundant material possessions and the temptation of being overly impressed with our own powers, abilities, and talents. Therefore, we have much to learn from the poor and dejected about putting God at the center of our lives and realizing the limits our own capacities.

Citations

St. Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon on the Mount*. (<http://www.newadvent.org/gathers/16011.htm>).

Additional resources:

Being Poor: A Biblical Study (1987) by Leslie H. Hoppe.

Gospel Poverty: Witness to the Risen Christ: A Study of Biblical Spirituality (1981) by Michael D. Guinan.

The Kingdom of God in History (1988) by Benedict Viviano, O.P.

The Kingdom of God in 20th Century Interpretation (1987) by Wendell Willis.

October is Respect Life Month

Catholic Teaching on the Life and Dignity of the Human Person: Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, each person's life and dignity must be respected, whether that person is an innocent unborn child in a mother's womb, whether that person worked in the World Trade Center or a market in Baghdad, or even whether that person is a convicted criminal on death row. We believe that every human life is sacred from conception to natural death, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it protects and respects the life and dignity of the human person. —USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p. 13

Thanksgiving Baskets for Seniors

The Catholic Life Committee is again sponsoring Thanksgiving bags full of treats for senior citizens served by Midwest Palliative Care. If you've signed up to "adopt" a senior, you'll be getting further details from Carolyn Freeman and Peggy Dull.

October Prayer Keeping the Faith

I bind myself
God's power to guide me
God's might to uphold me
God's wisdom to teach me
God's eye to watch over me
God's ear to hear me
God's word to give me speech
God's hand to guide me
God's way to lie before me
God's shield to shelter me
God's host to secure me Amen
...from St. Patrick's Lorica

Is IJP Countercultural?

By: Mrs. Angie Gehm, Assistant Principal

Several years ago a School Life Committee (now the Catholic Life Committee) was formed to help address issues of school culture and climate at IJP. Bullying was the first issue we discussed. In doing so, we agreed with the concept that the culture of a school influences the amount and type of bullying that occurs. If the school community accepts this behavior, it may be more prevalent. If the school community sends a clear message that bullying behavior is unacceptable, it helps to combat it.

Our intention with the Catholic Life Committee was - and remains - to use our Catholic identity and culture to influence school environment. During our discussions over the years, we've identified that many of the attitudes and behaviors we were hoping to teach and foster are countercultural.

At the same time we were developing the Catholic Life Committee, my attention was drawn to an article "Why Good Schools Are Countercultural" written by the president of the National Association of Independent Schools. He writes, "What the research shows about schools... is that the best of the lot share two main characteristics: They have exceptional teachers and appropriate moral climates. The latter, often a product of schools with communities sharing common values, which tend to attract teachers wishing to teach in such an environment. What is certainly true is that the school's internal moral climate runs counter to that of the external culture, at least the prevailing popular culture."

The Beatitudes embody characteristics such as meekness, righteousness, mercy, purity of heart and peacemaking. Unfortunately, a daily look at news programs and newspapers holds countless examples of rationalizing of dishonesty, excusing violence, winning at all costs, crude language and coarse behaviors.

Are our efforts hopeless? I think not. Even if this were the only place where these qualities and values are fostered and expected, it would still be worthwhile, and we certainly appreciate your continued reinforcement of those values at home.

"There are two lasting bequests we
can hope to give our children.

One is roots, the other wings."

—Mortimer Adler



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Poor in Spirit: Bibliography

The Catholic Life Committee, thanks to librarian Pam Bartusiewicz, found these books which may help students and their parents think about the beatitude - Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.

The annotations and grade levels are from SWAN and the Metropolitan Library System for these titles.

Ages: 2-8

Cooper, Patrick. **Never Trust a Squirrel!**. When William the guinea pig finds himself in a life-threatening situation while exploring with a squirrel, he learns an important lesson about trust.

Doyle, Malachy. **Jody's Beans**. From spring to fall, with the help of her grandfather, Jody learns to plant, care for, harvests, prepare and eat some runner beans.

Fine, Edith Hope. **Under the Lemon Moon**. The theft of all the lemons from her lemon tree leads Rosalinda to an encounter with la Anciana, the Old One, who walks the Mexican countryside helping things grow, and an understanding of generosity and forgiveness.

Guthrie, Donna. **Rose for Abby, A**. Abby, whose father preaches in a large urban church, sees a homeless old woman searching the trash cans nearby and is inspired to do something for the neighborhood's many street people.

Kroll, Virginia L. **Makayla Cares About Others**. With her tool box and her talent for fixing things, eight-year-old Makayla tries to mend a neighbor's broken heart.

Mora, Pat. **Song of Francis and the Animals, The**. Saint Francis of Assisi, friend to all creatures, sings with various animals. Ages:5-8

Spelman, Cornelia. **When I Care About Others**. A little bear explains that he cares about the feelings of others and that others care about him. Ages: 5-8

Stroud, Bettye. **Down Home at Miss Dessa's**. In the South, in the 1940's, two young African-American sisters spend the day caring for a senior neighbor.

Ages: 8 - 13

Bauer, Marion Dane. **Question of Trust, A**. After his mother leaves the family, Brian copes with his feelings of rejection by secretly taking care of a stray cat and her two newborn kittens.

Coatsworth, Elizabeth. **Cat Who Went to Heaven, The**. A little cat comes to the home of a poor Japanese artist and, by humility and devotion, brings him good fortune.

DeFelice, Cynthia C. **Lostman's River**. In the early 1900s, thirteen-year-old Tyler encounters vicious hunters whose actions threaten to destroy the Everglades ecosystem, and as a result joins the battle to protect that fragile environment.

Hermes, Patricia. **Be still My Heart**. Summary: Despite the assurances of her best friend, Leslie, fifteen-year-old Allison is convinced that she is too ordinary and unattractive to be special to anyone, especially when the boy she likes most of all suddenly becomes involved with Leslie.

Rinaldi, Ann. **Staircase, The**. In 1878, after her mother's death on the way West, thirteen-year-old Lizzy Enders is left by her father at a convent school in Santa Fe, where she must deal with being the only non-Catholic student and where she plays a part in what some consider a miracle.

Tripp, Valerie. **Josefina Saves the Day: A Summer Story**. In 1825 when Josefina trusts a trader in Santa Fe with an important deal, she makes a surprising discovery about this young American who leaves town without paying her.

Any questions or comments about this publication or the material covered within, please contact Natalie Lamb of The Catholic Life Committee. Phone 708-748-3909 or seslam@ameritech.net.