

## Article 3

# The Beatitudes: New Life in Christ

If you have ever tried to make a positive change in your life, you probably discovered how hard it can be. Whether committing to spending more time in prayer, working harder in school, or getting more physical exercise, the majority of people give up on such commitments within a month! The effort required to change seems too much for us, and we give up.

Now think about God. After the Fall, he did not abandon humankind. The inspiring stories of the Old Testament reveal to us that after Adam and Eve's sin, God was at work to get human beings to turn away from sin and to turn toward him. He called Abraham to be the father of a Chosen People. Through Moses, he formed a sacred covenant with his Chosen People and gave them Divine Law to teach them how to live as a holy people. He gave them rituals and the priesthood so they could unite with him and with one another in prayerful worship. When the people failed to keep their covenant commitments, God called judges, kings, and prophets to lead them back to him. You might be justified in thinking that if anyone has reason to give up on us, surely it is God.

But God never gives up on humanity, both communally and individually. You have studied **salvation history** and the **Paschal Mystery** in other courses. You know how God the Father sent his only begotten Son as his ultimate saving act. You know how Jesus Christ saves us from sin and death through his suffering, death, Resurrection, and Ascension. You know that those who believe in Christ have new life in the Holy Spirit. The battle against sin and death has been won. In light of this reality, every person in the world faces a question only he or she can answer: Will you answer Christ's call to place your faith in him?

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**salvation history** ► The pattern of specific events in human history in which God clearly reveals his presence and saving actions. Salvation was accomplished once and for all through Jesus Christ, a truth foreshadowed and revealed throughout the Old Testament.

**Paschal Mystery** ► The work of salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ mainly through his Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension.



This is a painting from the Church of the Transfiguration on the top of Mount Tabor in Israel. The tablet that Moses is holding and the light around his forehead symbolize the divine truth provided by God's Law.

## Called to Beatitude

Perhaps you have never thought about what your goal in life is. Lots of people don't give it much thought. We just go with the flow, doing whatever our family and friends are doing. Advertising and social media often guide what we want and how we act. And then one day, something happens that makes us wake up and ask: "What am I doing with my life? What is going to bring me true happiness?" Hopefully, we ask these questions sooner than later! Unfortunately, for some people, this doesn't happen until they've experienced a great loss or have gone into a deep depression. God doesn't wish this for us, of course. He'd much rather we seriously listen to the truths he has revealed when we are young. An important revealed truth is that the Beatitudes can help us find our purpose in life and become the people God wants us to be.

In calling us to place our faith in him, Christ calls us to an entirely new vision of life. This vision is expressed in the Beatitudes. You will find these in Matthew 5:3–12 and Luke 6:20–26. If you haven't read them in a while, look them up and read them again. They present a vision of life that is radically different from the vision of life held by many people, both in Jesus' time and in our time. Just consider the meaning of the first beatitude in Matthew: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, / for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). Being poor in spirit is the opposite of being self-centered or egotistical. It means putting other people's needs before our own. It means trusting in God, not

just in ourselves, for what we need. And living this way comes with a promise, that we shall be citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, both in this life and for all eternity with God in Heaven.

The other seven beatitudes are just as radical in their implications. They illustrate the paradoxes of God's wisdom. It is only in looking to other people's needs that our deepest needs will be met. It is only in letting ourselves feel grief that we shall know God's comfort. It is only in being persecuted for doing what is right that we shall be worthy of Heaven. As we begin to understand the meaning of each beatitude, we start to see the incredible life that Christ calls us to as his disciples. That life we might call a life of **beatitude**.



Which of the Beatitudes makes you feel most like you have found your purpose in life?

The Beatitudes teach us our vocation as Christians, the goal of our existence. We call this goal by different names: coming into the Kingdom of God, the beatific vision, entering into the joy of the Lord, being adoptive children of God (also called divine filiation), or entering into God's rest. By living the Beatitudes, we begin to experience on Earth the happiness that God has wanted human beings to know from the beginning of creation. A life of beatitude purifies our hearts and prepares us for the eternal happiness and joy that will come when we enter into perfect communion with the Holy Trinity in Heaven.

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**beatitude** ► Our vocation as Christians, the goal of our existence. It is true blessedness or happiness that we experience partially here on Earth and perfectly in Heaven.

Living the Beatitudes	
Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12)	Modern Meaning
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	Be humble; do not be attached to material possessions; trust in God to provide all that you need.
Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.	Be aware and supportive to other people's hardships and losses; do not ignore someone who is suffering.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.	Respect other people's freedom, and be gentle in your relationships; do not be pushy or manipulative.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.	Treat other people with respect, and work for justice for all people and the Earth itself; do not participate in unjust systems and structures.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.	Forgive yourself and others, even those who have hurt you the most; do not hold on to grudges.
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.	Practice charity (loving kindness), chastity (sexual purity), and love of truth (orthodoxy); do not expose yourself to the things—especially the addictive things—that will harm your heart, body, and faith.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.	Be a peacemaker and a bridge-builder by listening to those with different ideas and opinions and seeking truth wherever it might be found; never let anger alone guide your actions.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	Do what is right and speak the truth, even if it means some people, including your family and friends, will disagree with you or get upset.
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.	If you do all these things, you will not be popular with everyone, but you will find true peace and true happiness, both in this life and in the next!

Living the Beatitudes brings meaning to our moral choices. For example, the Beatitudes promise that we will know happiness by embracing the hardships of life, not by avoiding them. They promise that we will know true joy by pursuing righteousness (or justice) and peace, not by pursuing wealth, fame,

## CATHOLICS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

[Saint Martin de Porres](#) (1579–1639) was born in Peru in the sixteenth century. His father was a Spanish nobleman, and his mother was a freed African slave. His family lived in poverty because Martin's father abandoned him and his mother. Perhaps worse, Martin was ridiculed and demeaned because of his mixed race. Because of Peruvian law at the time, he was not allowed to become a full member of the Dominicans, despite his deep desire to join this religious order. As a lay volunteer, Martin was assigned only the most menial tasks, which he did with love and grace. Eventually, he became a Dominican brother and was made head of the Dominican infirmary where he had an incredible healing ministry. Treating slave and nobleperson alike, Martin lived the Beatitudes of Christ by becoming one with those who endured poverty, grief, and persecution.



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### The Holy Trinity: Our Compass and Our Strength

Through our Baptism, we are already on our way to living a life of beatitude. Through the Sacrament of Baptism, Original Sin and all personal sin are washed away, removing our separation from God. We die to sin and the false promises of Satan, which lead only to unhappiness and eternal death. We are reborn to a new life in Christ, which leads to true happiness and eternal life. As baptized people, we trust God to do for us what we cannot do by ourselves.

God provides us with what we need to live the Beatitudes. Through Scripture and Tradition, he provides the compass, showing us the way to live as disciples. Through the graces given in Baptism, the Eucharist, and the other sacraments, we are provided with the strength we need. Called by God the Father, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and guided by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we constantly grow closer to the Holy Trinity

## TEACHER NOTE

Extend this exercise by having the students apply the understandings from this experience to their lives by writing a short essay that addresses the following questions:

- What kind of a person do I hope to become as I grow into adulthood?
- What are the temptations that keep me from living a life of love and happiness?
- Where or from whom have I found the most help in becoming the person God is calling me to be?

7. **Draw** the discussion to a close by posing the following questions and inviting the students to share their answers.


- How do we know that God's plan is for human beings to know love and happiness?
- Why do Christians believe that communion with God fulfills the ultimate human search for love and happiness?
- How is Christian morality related to God's gifts of intellect and free will?

## Apply

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 4 (Chapter 1)

## Beatitude Tableaus

Lead the students in creating still-life poses depicting how we might live out the New Law revealed in the Beatitudes. (U1, Q1, K3, S3, S4)

1.  **Prepare** by ensuring that all the students have read article 3 in the student book and Matthew 3:1–12 prior to this learning experience and that they will have access to their student books (print or digital) during class.

2. **Introduce** the students to the focus of this step in these or similar words:

- Our faith and our Baptism call us to actually share in Christ's life, to be part of his mission here on Earth. How do we participate in his divine mission? We do so by living the Beatitudes.

Review with the students the following points:

- The Beatitudes teach us our vocation as Christians.
- By living the Beatitudes, we begin to experience on Earth the love and happiness that God has wanted human beings to know from the beginning.

Article 3  
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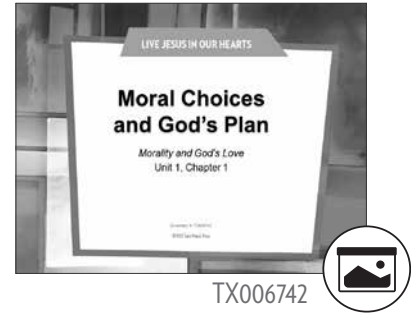
Paschal Mystery ➤ The work of salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ mainly through his suffering, death, Resurrection, and Ascension.



- To live the Beatitudes also means to use our gifts of free will and intellect to make good moral choices.
- We are called by the Father, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and guided by the teachings and examples of Christ to live with moral integrity, to live the Beatitudes in our daily life.

**TEACHER NOTE**

You can also present these points using the PowerPoint presentation “Chapter 1 Overview: Moral Choices and God’s Plan” (TX006742) (see [www.smp.org/livejesus\\_morality](http://www.smp.org/livejesus_morality)).



3. **Arrange** the students into eight groups. Direct the students to find the chart “Living the Beatitudes” on page 23 of the student book. Assign each group one of the Beatitudes listed there.
4. **Ask** each group to review their assigned beatitude, reading it and its modern meaning from the chart. When the groups are finished with this, they should do the following:
  - Discuss the meaning of their assigned beatitude and how it may be lived out by teenagers today.
  - Decide on one specific scenario that best demonstrates how this beatitude is lived today.
  - Determine together how to depict this scenario by a silent and motionless pose that includes all the group members. This still-life pose may be referred to as a tableau. If necessary, they may depict several tableaux in sequence, moving quickly from one motionless pose to the next.

Allow the groups 15–20 minutes to complete these tasks.



**TEACHER NOTE**

Consider creating a digital slideshow of the tableaux by taking a photo of each group in their pose (or poses) and then inserting the photos into a digital presentation program. After inserting all the group’s poses, continue with step 5, using the slideshow to present the tableaux.

5. **Call** each group to present its tableau, holding the pose for about 60 seconds to give classmates an opportunity to consider the message. Then ask the class to identify the beatitude and describe the scene. Allow several students the opportunity to give their opinion. Direct the group presenting the tableau to share which beatitude they represented and their intent in selecting this scene to represent this beatitude.



Article 4

TEACHER NOTE

Instead of asking the whole class to identify the beatitude for each tableau, turn this into a contest by asking the students to number a sheet of paper from 1 to 8. After each tableau is presented, they write down the beatitude they think matches that tableau. Do not have the groups share which beatitude they were presenting until after all the tableaus are presented. Have the students exchange papers and score each other's answers to identify which students correctly matched the most Beatitudes.

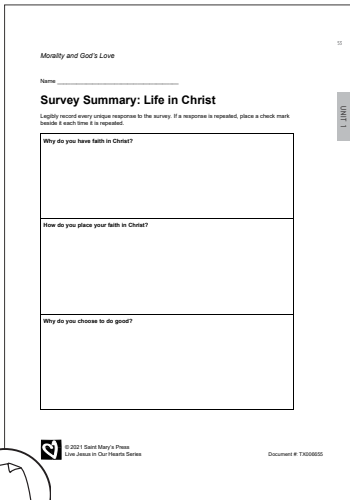
6. **Conclude** by leading the students in discussing the “Hmmm . . .” question at the end of article 3:
  - Which of the Beatitudes do you find the most challenging to accept or to live out?



LEARNING EXPERIENCE 5 (Chapter 1)  
New Law Survey

Facilitate a student discussion on the New Law of Christ based on the results of small-group surveys. (U1, Q1, K4, S5, S6)

1. **Assign** the students a survey activity they must complete outside of class. Each student must interview five Christian individuals, including at least two peers and two adults. They must ask the individuals they interview the following questions and record their responses. Write these on the board for the students to copy.
  - Why do you have faith in Christ?
  - How do you place your faith in Christ?
  - Why do you choose to do good?
2. **Prepare** by ensuring that all the students have read article 4 in the student book prior to this learning experience and that they will have access to their Bibles and student books (print or digital) during class. Photocopy or download and print the handout “Survey Summary: Life in Christ” (TX006655), on page 53, one for each student. If you choose to use the PowerPoint presentation “Learning Experience 5: God’s Plan” (TX006745), download it from [www.smp.org/livejesus\\_morality](http://www.smp.org/livejesus_morality).
3. **Introduce** the theme of this learning experience in these or similar words:
  - We are going to consider the significance of living a life marked by faith in Christ. You will explore in more depth the significance of faith in Christ for daily living and the impact of following the New Law of Christ as the path to moral goodness.



TX006655



TX006745