



When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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.

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I believe in you with a faith that never seeks to test you. I trust in you, hoping to learn to accept and follow your will, even when it does not make sense to the way that I see things. I love you, and I want to love you and those around me with a love similar to the love you have shown to me.

Petition: Lord, help me accept sacrifices and overcome difficulties in order to gain heaven.

1. The Beatitudes Don't Make Sense: As we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints' Day, the Church calls us to contemplate the promises Jesus makes to all those who follow him. At first, they don't seem very attractive. Jesus lists a whole series of things that most people would probably avoid. They would see them as interfering with their wants and desires, Yet, Jesus says that we will be blessed if we have them in our lives. The word in the original Greek is *makarios*, which means "happy". This doesn't make sense. I am supposed to be happy when I am poor, mourning, meek, lacking righteousness, merciful, clean-hearted, a peacemaker, persecuted and insulted? That's not what I see on TV, in the movies, on the Internet. It's not what many of the people I know would recommend. So what is Jesus' big idea telling me this? Is he out to make me miserable?

2. Sacrificing for Worldly Glory: We can see that the whole picture isn't gloomy. Jesus

says that if we accept these difficult things, there will be rewards. And the rewards sound pretty good. In fact, they sound great: the Kingdom of Heaven, comfort, inheriting the land, satisfaction in seeing righteousness done, receiving mercy, seeing God, being a child of God, a great reward in heaven. Who wouldn't want these things? Don't people work a lot harder for a lot less? Don't athletes train for years, giving up all kinds of pleasures, submitting themselves to intense suffering at times only for a brief moment of glory in some competition? Don't businessmen work long hours, giving up pleasures and making immense sacrifices just to make a few more dollars? Isn't what Jesus offers us much better than any of that? Better than a gold medal or even a million dollars?

3. But I Am Not Interested in Heavenly Things: Anything worth having is worth making sacrifices for, and the more it is worth, the greater sacrifices we should be willing to make for it. Perhaps a gold medal is worth the sacrifices the athlete makes to win it. Perhaps a million dollars are worth the sacrifices that a businessman makes to gain them. If heaven is really all it is supposed to be, isn't it worth all the sacrifices Jesus mentions here – and more? If people are willing to make such great sacrifices to gain things they cannot keep, shouldn't I be willing to make even greater sacrifices to gain the eternal happiness of heaven? Of course, many people with the talent to do great things in this world never do them because they just aren't that interested or motivated. Is that why I don't do more to gain heaven? Just not that interested? What will it take to motivate me to really desire what Jesus offers?

Conversation with Christ: Dear Jesus, I don't do much to make the Beatitudes come to life in me. Help me to give heaven its full value. Help me to desire it more each day. Help me to meditate on what heaven will be like so I will love it more and more and be willing to do anything – whatever it takes – to get there and help many others arrive as well.

Resolution: I will spend at least five minutes today imagining what heaven will be like so as to increase my desire for heaven and enable me to make the sacrifices necessary to get there. Jesus is setting up a mansion there for me. He is going to put everything that he can in it to please me and make me happy.