



**A Catholic Women's League led mission on behalf of Divine Infant Parish, Orleans ON.**

***The First Beatitude:  
Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is  
the Kingdom of Heaven***

***Presented by Legion of Mary***



**The Beatitudes** reveal the divine path and purpose for a life lived in the name of Jesus. They are statements of grace, not law, revealed to us by Christ Himself. Through them He reveals the spiritual attributes that, by God's Grace, will ultimately guide us to His Kingdom.



If we ask the average church-going Canadian to define a “blessed” life, along with good health and family, the big ticket items would be: “house and car, good job, vacation, defined pension and a family doctor. And perhaps a cottage.”

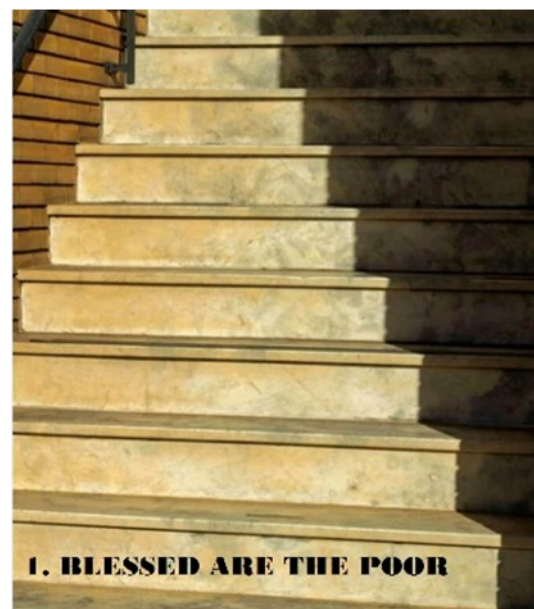
Yet to Jesus, as evidenced through His Sermon on the Mount, it is the opposite. To be blessed is to be poor, hungry and marginalized.

The Beatitudes lead us from a life of material comfort and aspiration towards one of selflessness lead by the Spirit. (Pope Francis, *General Audience, Library of the Apostolic Palace, 29 April 2020*)

Presented in hierarchical fashion the Beatitudes infer that each one builds systematically upon the foundation of the first: **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."** (Matthew 5:3) and ends on the eighth “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness; sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:11). (To see the progression of all eight Beatitudes, please see the diagram on the last page).

This booklet will take you through a journey of learning about and living this First Beatitude, *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit*, over the course of two months. In total there will be 8 weeks of challenges for you to complete. The challenges of Part I (the first month) will focus on learning about this Beatitude. The challenges of Part II (the second month), will focus on activities which help you to live this Beatitude, to do things for yourself, for others and for your community.

For the next 2 months place all your attention on the first Beatitude, ***“Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God” (Matthew 5:3)*** to learn how to be poor in spirit, and, more importantly, how to live it.



## PART I. LEARNING ABOUT THIS BEATITUDE

### WEEK 1 CHALLENGE ~ POPE FRANCIS’ REFLECTION

Let us first begin learning about the first Beatitude by reading Pope Frances’ reflection. As you read it, consider what it means to be spiritually poor. How does being spiritually poor help you with your relationship with Christ, and ultimately allow you to have the Kingdom of God?



## POPE FRANCIS GENERAL AUDIENCE

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*Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning,*

Today we are examining the first of the eight Beatitudes of the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus begins to proclaim his path to happiness with a paradoxical announcement: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (5:3). It is a surprising path and poverty is a strange condition for Beatitude.

We have to ask ourselves: what does he mean here by the “*poor*”? If Matthew had only used this word, then the meaning would have been simply economic, that is, it would have meant people who have few or no means of sustenance and are in need of the help of others.

However, unlike Luke’s, the Gospel of Matthew speaks about “*poor in spirit*”. What does this mean? According to the Bible, the spirit is the breath of life that God communicated to Adam: it is our most intimate dimension, let us say the spiritual dimension, the most intimate one, the one that makes us human beings, the profound core of our being. Thus, “the poor in spirit” are those who are and who feel poor, mendicants in their intimate being. Jesus proclaims them Blessed because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

How many times have we been told the opposite! You have to be something in life, be someone ... One must make a name for oneself... Loneliness and unhappiness stem from this: if I have to be “someone”, then I am in competition with others and I worry excessively about my ego. If I do not accept being poor, I hate everything that reminds me of my fragility. Because this fragility prevents me from becoming an important person, someone who is rich, not only moneywise, even well-known: everything.

Before oneself, everyone knows well that, as much as one does one’s best, he/she remains radically incomplete and vulnerable. There is no trick to cover up this vulnerability. Each of us is vulnerable inside. One has to see where. But how trying life is if one does not accept one’s limitations! Life is hard. One lives poorly. One does not digest the limitation; [yet] it is there. Proud people do not ask for help. They cannot ask for help. It does not come easily to them to ask for help because they have to appear self-sufficient. And how many of them do need help, but their pride prevents them from asking for help. And how difficult it is to admit a mistake and ask for forgiveness! When I offer advice to newlyweds who ask me how to live their marriage well, I tell them: “There are three magic words: may I, thank you, I am sorry”. They are words that come from poverty in spirit. One must not be intrusive but rather say excuse me: “Do you think it is good to do this?”, so there can be dialogue in the family, spouses are in dialogue. “You did this for me, thank you I needed it”. We always make mistakes, one slips: “I am sorry”. And usually couples, newlyweds those who are here and are numerous tell me: “The third one is the hardest”, saying sorry, asking for forgiveness. Because proud people cannot do this. They cannot say they are sorry: they are always right. They are not poor in spirit. The Lord instead, never grows tired of forgiving. Unfortunately, it is we who get tired of asking for forgiveness (cf. [Angelus, 17 March 2013](#)). The tiredness of asking for forgiveness. This is a bad state!

Why is it difficult to ask for forgiveness? Because it humiliates our hypocritical image. And yet, constantly seeking to hide one’s weaknesses is tiring and distressing. Jesus Christ tells us: being poor is an opportunity for grace; and he shows us the way out from this difficulty. We are given the right to be poor in spirit because this is the path to the Kingdom of God.

But a fundamental thing must be mentioned: we do not have to transform ourselves to become poor in spirit. We do not have to undergo any transformation because we already are! We are poor ... or more clearly: we are “wretched” in spirit! We are in need of everything. We are all poor in spirit, we are beggars. It is the human condition.

The Kingdom of God is of the poor in spirit. There are those who have kingdoms in this world: they have goods and comforts. But they are kingdoms that end. The power of men and women, even of the greatest empires, pass and disappear. Often, we see on the television news or in newspapers that that strong, powerful leader or that government that existed yesterday and no longer exists today, has fallen. The wealth of this world fades away and so does money. The elderly used to teach us that shrouds have no pockets. It is true. I never saw a removal truck behind a funeral procession: no one takes anything with them. This wealth stays here.

The Kingdom of God belongs to the poor in spirit. There are those who have kingdoms in this world, they have goods and comforts. But we know how they end. Only those who know how to love what is truly good more than themselves, reign. And this is the power of God.

In what way did Christ show his power? It was by doing what the kings of the earth do not do: give his life for mankind. And this is true power. The power of fraternity, the power of charity, the power of love, the power of humility. This is what Christ did.

Herein lies true freedom: those who have this power of humility, of service, of fraternity are free. The poverty praised in the Beatitudes is at the service of this freedom.

Because there is a poverty that we have to accept, that of being alive, and a poverty that instead we have to seek, the practical one, in the things of this world, in order to be free and to be able to love. We should always seek freedom of the heart, the freedom that has its roots in our own poverty.

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## **WEEK 2 CHALLENGE ~ ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA**



Blessed are the Poor in Spirit seems like an odd priority. Who or what is poor in spirit?

Poverty in whatever form is a deficit. For some, especially those for whom existence is a constant battle against a deficit of food, shelter, or safety, it is the result of circumstance. For others however, to adopt this arduous life is a choice.

One such was **Mother Teresa (now St. Teresa of Calcutta)** who chose material poverty to bring her closer to those she served and ultimately to God. Her humility serves as a witness in living the Beatitudes not only in her thoughts and deeds but equally in her words.

**Jesus:** “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”.

**St. Teresa:** “When you have nothing left but God, you have more than enough to start over again”.

“The spiritual poverty of the Western World is much greater than the physical poverty of our people” (in India).

Her words and experiences help us visualize the hope and joy implicit in the Beatitudes, even when we are called to suffer.

**Poor in spirit** describes every level of want or need. It hints at a moral and spiritual vacuum distancing us from God’s purpose. And it is through this that we appreciate the attributes of generosity, humility and compassion. We are, in reality, often called to act in ways counterintuitive to the call to poverty largely because society measures success via materialistic achievement.

But this is not how Christ defined His status as King of Kings.

In shunning all earthly excesses, He gave, did not take, ultimately giving His life to redeem mankind.

Jesus exemplified *poor in spirit* when “He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born of human likeness, and being found in human form, He humbled Himself” (Philippians 2:7-8).

St. Teresa similarly responded to those in need. “If I had not picked up that first person, poor and dying on the street, I would not have picked up the thousands later on.”



For this week, explore a little more about St. Teresa of Calcutta who lived selflessly among the poor of Calcutta and relied wholly on Christ to aid her in her life’s mission. You can do this by watching videos/movies about Mother Teresa, by visiting websites or reading books about her life and wonderful charity, *Missionaries of Charity*.

## WEEK 3 CHALLENGE ~ SCRIPTURE READING

For this week, let us turn to a Bible passage which embodies the First Beatitude, Blessed are the Poor in Spirit. Please read Matthew 15:11-32 *“The Canaanite Woman’s Faith”*. While reading this passage, ask yourself how it demonstrates the First Beatitude. In what way does the Canaanite woman model the First Beatitude being ‘Poor in Spirit’?

### **The Canaanite Woman’s Faith**

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

## PART II ~ LIVING THIS BEATITUDE

### **WEEK 4 CHALLENGE ~ LIVING THIS BEATITUDE AS AN INDIVIDUAL**

We have learned the First Beatitude, “Blessed are the Poor in Spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”.

For this week, let us focus on ourselves. Allow the following Psalm and quotes from St. Teresa of Calcutta and Pope Francis inspire and guide us to live the First Beatitude and put it into action.

*“The world is full of good people. If you can’t find one, be one. Do not allow yourselves to be disheartened by any failure as long as you have done your best.” (St. Teresa of Calcutta)*

*“There are three magic words: may I; thank you; I am sorry”. They are words that come from poverty in spirit”.*  
*(Pope Francis)*

*“Be still and know that I am God”. (Psalm 46:10).*

We must consciously avoid distractions that harm our ability to listen, to be still, to pray, to meditate and to grow our spiritual roots. This week do one or more of the following to help you grow personally Poor in Spirit.

1. **Reflection:** Write your thoughts in a journal, consider your behaviour in life. How do you see God the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit in your daily existence? Are they at the forefront of your life or the last thing you think about? Do you begin and end your day with prayer? Do you openly share your gifts with others, likewise do you accept the gifts others have to offer you? Are you grateful for all you have?
2. **Self-examination:** Regardless of your social status, income, profession, abilities, do you humbly acknowledge your dependence and reliance on God for His mercy, blessings and graces?
3. **Go to confession:** Examine your conscience and with all humility, go to a priest and confess. Repent of your sins.
4. **Prayer:** make a point to pray the Rosary every day.

*“The Rosary is a prayer, both so humble and simple, and theologically rich in biblical content. I beg you to pray it.”*  
*(St. Pope John Paul II).*

Pray to the Holy Spirit for discernment of God’s Will into your life. Do the Stations of the Cross in remembrance of our Lord’s passion.

5. **Go to adoration:** Spend an hour in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and engage in a personal dialogue with our Lord. Give thanks for the many gifts He has given you personally in all situations good or bad and make petitions for yourself and for others.

6. **Acceptance:** Accept our sufferings knowing that nothing happens to us without God's permission. Blessed are those who suffer because it is through our sufferings that we realize how badly we need God.
7. **Smile:** "Peace begins with a smile. Every time you smile at someone it is an action of love, a gift to that person and a beautiful thing." (St. Teresa of Calcutta)

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1-2)

"We must know that we have been created for greater things, not just to be a number in the world, not just to go for diplomas and degrees, this work and that work. We have been created in order to love and be loved. God doesn't require us to succeed, he only requires that you try." (St. Teresa of Calcutta).

## WEEK 5 CHALLENGE ~ LIVING THE BEATITUDE AS A FAMILY

"What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family. Hold one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you. Love is a fruit in season at all times and within reach of every hand." (St. Teresa of Calcutta).

With that quote, let us move beyond ourselves and involve our family with the following suggested activities:

1. **Prayer:** "The family that prays together stays together." (Fr. Patrick Peyton).  
Encourage family members to go to church together, reflect on Scripture, begin a novena and study the Holy Bible together. Set up an altar in your own homes, a space available for everyone for prayer and worship.  
"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with them." (Matthew 18:20). Thomas Aquinas quoted: "it is impossible that the prayers of many should not be heard, if one prayer is made up as it were out of many supplications."
2. **Teach children the Angelus Prayer.** "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22-6).
3. As a family, **visit** other churches as a means to further thrive in one's faith.
4. **Pray the Rosary** as a family. According to traditions, the blessed Virgin Mary made 15 promises to St Dominic that whoever devoutly prays the Rosary, our Lady will obtain such promises. Likewise, encourage the family to **pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy** together to receive grace from His infinite mercy.
5. **Get to know the Saints** by reading on their holy lives and create an open dialogue with your family to discuss and share opinions and ideas on how to emulate and pray to them for intercession.
6. **Eat together** as a family and say grace before and after meals. Celebrate special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries and special holidays to strengthen the tie that binds family together.
7. **Offer a Mass intention** in thanksgiving for graces and miracles received and to remember deceased family members and loved ones.
8. **Engage** the family in the discussion of the First Beatitude and share your thoughts on your relationship with God, on how Christ led His life with humility and selfless service.
9. **Set family-oriented goals that are fun and easy to accomplish.** Participate in Church-sponsored events. Get involved in community activities together. Foster togetherness and share of ideas.
10. **Respect each other's individuality,** be kind and observe set boundaries. Be mindful of each other's situation and encourage open communication.

"Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment. I prefer you to make mistakes in kindness, than working miracles in unkindness." (St. Teresa of Calcutta)

## WEEK 6 CHALLENGE ~ LIVING THE BEATITUDE AS A COMMUNITY

### “BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN”

This does not refer to material poverty but mostly spiritual poverty that is our deepest need and longing for God to be in our lives. As humans we are totally dependent upon God for everything. We are nothing without Him. Blessed are those who realize that material things do not last and cannot satisfy as they are just passing pleasures and luxuries in our world.

“The most terrible poverty is loneliness. The feeling of being unloved, unwanted, uncared for, and forgotten by everybody, I think is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat. The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.” (St. Teresa of Calcutta)

What does it look like to live the First Beatitude and put it into action in our community?

1. **Visit** more often families, friends and loved ones living in retirement homes, especially those who are sick and lonely, to socialize and pray with them.
2. **Join** the group of people who pray the Rosary together every First Saturday of the month at the corner of MacArthur Road and Vanier Parkway, Ottawa Ontario from noon until 1:00 pm
3. **Offer prayers** for the intentions of the poor, the homeless, the sick, the dying, the souls in Purgatory, for the illumination of conscience and for peace in the world.
4. **Pray** for our Priests, Deacons, Sisters, Lay Ministers and everyone involved in all of church ministries.
5. **Volunteer** your time to help feed the hungry, and the less fortunate people of our society. In your own capacity, help our neighbours, brothers and sisters as Jesus said, whatever we do for the least of our brethren, we do it for him.
6. **Donate** and support your local food bank. Share your gently used articles of clothing and other household items to charities that do not sell them so families in need could truly benefit from such donations.
7. **Know** your community, get involved and be informed. Help fight social isolation of neighbors and/or family members especially those who live alone, are elderly, have health or mobility issues to let them know that support is available to them.
8. **Educate** the children in Elementary Catholic schools about the Rosary by teaching them how to make it, how to use it and why we should pray it. This is done annually at Mother Teresa School in Russell, Ontario for Grades 2, 4 and 6. If you're interested in participating, please contact the Legion of Mary.
9. **Schedule Intentions:** Most churches have one. Write down your prayer request wherever you find it. The book is carried and placed at the foot of the altar during the offertory of the Mass and prayed over by the priest.

“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless. Do not think that love in order to be genuine has to be extraordinary. It is not how much we give but how much love we give into giving.” (St Teresa of Calcutta)

## WEEK 7 CHALLENGE ~ BLESSINGS RECEIVED & CLOSING PRAYER

It is the last week on Living the First Beatitude. For this final week, pay particular attention to the following when praying and reflecting on the First Beatitude:

1. **Scripture:** Psalm 23
2. **Our Father:** ....and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...
3. **Magnificat:** My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for He has looked with favour on his lowly servant.
4. **Rosary:** The Third Joyful Mystery is the Nativity - the Fruit is Poverty in Spirit.

Spend some time in reflection, thanking God. Thank Him for the many graces you received while living this Beatitude for yourself, for your family, and for your community. The First Beatitude prepares us to meet Christ and, as we live in this posture of dependence and humility, He comforts us and fills us with His righteousness.

Make a commitment to continue to live the first Beatitude and make it a part of your spiritual journey in Christ. We will close with a final prayer. Pray this every night for this week.



### Psalm 23 The Divine Shepherd A Psalm of David

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;  
he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
my whole life long.



# THE BEATITUDE LADDER

**Blessed are they (blessed are you) who are persecuted:** we take up our crosses and follow Jesus, committing ourselves to everything He has taught us, even enduring persecution for His sake, but doing so joyfully because we know He has promised us eternal life in our Father's Kingdom.

With Christ living in us we become conformed to His image of peace and love ⇨ In the image of Christ we become the divine children of His Father

*"The only ladder to heaven is the Cross"*  
~ St. Rose of Lima

**Blessed are the peacemakers**

When old hearts are replaced with the pure heart of Jesus our redeemer ⇨ We will see God's face in the faces of everyone with whom we share His love

**Blessed are the pure in heart**

Being merciful and showing forgiveness ⇨ You will be given mercy and forgiveness through Jesus' perfect Sacrifice on the Cross

**Blessed are the merciful**

**Blessed are those who hunger & thirst for righteousness**

Seeking the King of Righteousness ⇨ You will be filled by Christ in the Eucharist

← **Turning Point**

Yield our will to God's will for our lives = renewed ⇨ Inherit "the Land"; the Church = dominion to bind and loose

**Blessed are the meek**

Mourn own sins and world sin = purification ⇨ comfort & strength, Reconciliation

**Blessed are those who mourn**

Michal E. Hunt  
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Those who acknowledge their need for God ⇨ Kingdom of Heaven = eternal life promised through Baptism and faithfully living the Law of love on a life time journey of faith

**Blessed are the poor in spirit**

## The Progression of the Beatitudes

Beatitudes contain 7 or 8 (depending on how you count them) successive fundamental spiritual states that every Christian must strive to achieve. The Beatitudes must be lived fully and completely just as the 10 Commandments have to be lived in their entirety.  
**Gospel of St. Matthew 5: 1-11**

To learn about the Catholic Women's League  
please visit our parish website at  
[www.divineinfant.on.ca/cwl.html](http://www.divineinfant.on.ca/cwl.html)



Catholic Women's League  
Divine Infant Parish  
Orleans ON

### **FOUR WAYS TO BE A CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE MEMBER**

- Fully Active:** pays dues, attends meetings, serves on committees, and takes advantage of the personal and spiritual opportunities the League offers.
- Partially Active:** pays dues, is willing to help when able on a task by task basis, wants to be part of the League and wants to make a difference but has limited time to offer.
- Prayerfully Active:** pays dues and prays for the League and members
- Financially Active:** pays dues-both the prayerfully and financially active members may become more active in the future as their circumstances permit.

### **THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA** **MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR THE DIVINE INFANT COUNCIL**

(Please Print)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate which Mass you regularly attend: \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay \$40 for the CWL membership by cheque made out to 'Divine Infant CWL Council' or by cash or by e-transfer [CWLMembershipDivineInfant@gmail.com](mailto:CWLMembershipDivineInfant@gmail.com)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please submit during membership drive, or mail this form along with your membership fee to:

Organization Chairperson,  
Divine Infant Council Catholic Women's League  
6658 Bilberry Drive Orleans, ON K1C 2S9

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