



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



THE EIGHTH BEATITUDE



**"Blessed are those who are
persecuted for righteousness'
sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
(Matthew 5:10)**

Presented by the Knights of Columbus (Council 7873)

MEN ON A MISSION

A Catholic Brotherhood Changing the World

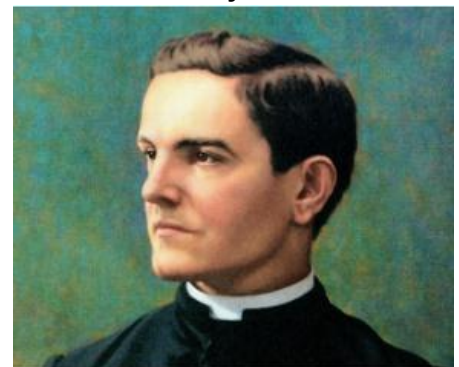
A Catholic men's fraternal organization dedicated to charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism. Founded in 1882 by Blessed (Father) Michael J. McGivney, it provides charitable works, financial assistance to members, and promotes Catholic values.

THE SIX MEXICAN MARTYRS

OF THE 25 MEXICAN MARTYRS
WHOM ST. JOHN PAUL II
CANONIZED IN 2000, SIX WERE
PRIESTS AND MEMBERS OF THE
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS.



Michael McGivney, Founder, K of C



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.



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, turn to page 12.

This booklet will take you through a journey of learning about and living the eighth Beatitude, "*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" over the course of two months.

In total there will be 7 weeks of challenges for you to complete. The challenges of Part I will focus on learning about this Beatitude. The challenges of Part II will focus on activities which help you to live this Beatitude; to do things for yourself, for your family and for your community.



PART I: LEARNING ABOUT THE BEATITUDE

WEEK 1 CHALLENGE ~ POPE FRANCIS' REFLECTION

Let us first begin learning about the eighth Beatitude by reading Pope Frances' reflection. As you read it, consider what it means to persecuted for righteousness' sake and how is it that you will obtain the kingdom of heaven.



POPE FRANCIS GENERAL AUDIENCE

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

With today's audience, we conclude our journey into the evangelical Beatitudes. As we have heard, **the last one proclaims the eschatological joy of those persecuted for righteousness' sake.** This Beatitude announces the same happiness as the first one: the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the persecuted as it does to the poor in spirit. We thus understand that we have reached the end of our joint journey revealed in the previous proclamations.

The poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who thirst for holiness, mercy, the pure in heart and peacemakers may lead to persecution because of Christ. However, ultimately this persecution is a cause of joy and of great reward in heaven. The way of the Beatitudes is an Easter path that leads us from a life in accord with the world to one of God, from a life led by the flesh — that is by selfishness — to one guided by the Spirit.

With its idols, its compromises and its priorities, the world cannot accept this kind of life. The "structures of sin"^[1] that are often produced by the human mind, and are extraneous to the Spirit of truth that the world cannot receive, (cf. Jn 14:17), cannot but reject poverty or meekness or purity and declare life according to the Gospel as a mistake and a problem; thus as something to isolate. This is what the world thinks: "These [people] are idealists or fanatics...". This is how they think.

If the world lives as a function of money, then anyone who demonstrates that life can be lived in [self] giving and sacrifice becomes a nuisance to the system of greed. This word "nuisance" is key because Christian witness, which is so good for many people who follow it, bothers those who have a worldly mindset. They see it as chastising. When holiness appears and the life of the children of God emerges, there is something uncomfortable in that beauty that demands taking a stance: either to allow oneself to be questioned and to open oneself to the good or reject that light and harden one's heart, even until oppression and fury (cf. Wis 2:14-15). It is interesting and striking to note how hostility grows to fury in the persecution of martyrs. Just look at the persecutions of the last century, of the European dictatorships: how does one get to rage against Christians, against Christian witness and against the heroism of Christians?

But this demonstrates that the tragedy of persecution is also the place of liberation from subjection to the success, vainglory and compromise of the world. What makes those who are rejected by the world because of Christ rejoice? They rejoice at having found something that has more value than the entire world. Indeed: "For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" (Mk 8:36). What is the advantage there?

It is painful to recall that in this very moment, there are many Christians in various parts of the world who are suffering from persecution, and we must hope and pray that their trials will soon end. They are many: today's martyrs outnumber the martyrs of the first centuries. Let us express our

closeness to these brothers and sisters. We are a single body and these Christians are the bleeding limbs of the body of Christ who is the Church.

But we also have to be careful not to read this Beatitude from a self-commiserating, victimized perspective. In fact, mankind's contempt is not always synonymous with persecution: indeed shortly later, Jesus tells Christians that they are the "salt of the earth" and warns against the danger of "losing their taste" because in that case, salt "is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men" (Mt 5:13). Thus, when we lose the taste of Christ and the Gospel, there is also contempt which is our fault.

We have to be faithful to the humble way of the Beatitudes because it leads us to be of Christ and not of the world. It is worth remembering the journey of Saint Paul. When he thought he was a righteous person, he was in fact a persecutor, but when he found out he was a persecutor, he became a man of love who rejoiced in the suffering of the persecution inflicted on him (cf. Col 1:24).

If God grants us the grace to be more like the Crucified Christ and joined to his Passion, then exclusion and persecution are the manifestation of new life. This life is the same as the life of Christ who was "despised and rejected" for us men and women and for our salvation" (cf. Is 53:3; Acts 8:30-35). Welcoming his Spirit can lead us to have so much love in our heart as to offer our life for the world without making compromises with its deceit and accepting its rejection.

Compromises with the world are dangerous: Christians are always tempted to make compromises with the world, with the spirit of the world. This — rejecting compromises and journeying on the way of Jesus Christ — is the life of the Kingdom of Heaven, the greatest joy and true happiness. And, in persecutions there is always the presence of Jesus who accompanies us, the presence of Jesus who comforts us and the strength of the Holy Spirit that helps us to go forward. Let us not be discouraged when a life that is faithful to the Gospel draws persecution from people. There is the Holy Spirit who sustains us in this journey.

[1] Cf. *Discourse to participants in a workshop entitled: "New forms of solidarity: Towards fraternal Inclusion, Integration and Innovation", 5 February 2020: "idolatry of money, greed and corruption are all 'structures of sin' — as John Paul II called them — produced by the 'globalization of indifference'"*.

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Pope Francis ends his catechesis on the Beatitudes reminding us that whenever we face persecution because of our belief in Jesus, we are not alone. Jesus is always present with us. And the Holy Spirit sustains us.

Pope Francis' reflections on the eighth Beatitude emphasize that a life rooted in Christ's teachings will likely lead to conflict with the world. He presents the eighth Beatitude as a call to joyful perseverance in the face of a world that may reject the Gospel message. Following Christ wholeheartedly leads to true happiness, even amidst trials, and to the incomparable reward of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Action:

This week, let us pause and contemplate the words of Pope Francis: Christians are called not to compromise with the world, but to walk boldly on the path of Jesus Christ. This path is the life of the Kingdom, the source of true joy and lasting happiness.

Persecution may come, but we are never alone. Jesus walks with us, offering comfort, and the Holy Spirit grants us the strength to persevere. **This week, let us Act:** rejecting the temptations to conform, standing firm in the Gospel, and extending love and mercy to those around us. In faithfulness, we find courage; in courage, we discover the joy of the Kingdom.”

Let us Pray: “Jesus, I would rather endure years of suffering for You and Your Word than live in comfort without you. In the faithful witness of Your Mother and the Saints, I lift my heart to You, O Lord. Teach me to seek not my own will, but the will of Him who sent You, that all I think, speak, and do may follow the path of obedience and love You have set before me.” (John 5:30)



WEEK 2 CHALLENGE - SAINT JOSEPHINE BAKHITA

***‘If I were to meet the slave traders who kidnapped me and even those who tortured me,’
she once said, ‘I would kneel and kiss their hands, for if that did not happen,
I would not be a Christian and Religious today.’***



St. Josephine Bakhita (1869–1947) **Patron Saint of Victims of Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking**

Born into a wealthy family in the Darfur region of southern Sudan, Josephine was kidnapped at the age of seven, forced to walk nearly 970 kms barefoot, and sold into brutal slavery multiple times. It was her captors who gave her the name *Bakhita*, meaning “lucky” in Arabic.

In 1883, she was sold to an Italian consul who took her to Italy, where she encountered the Canossian Sisters. There, she discovered her faith, was baptized, and eventually joined the Canossian congregation herself.

From a life of persecution, suffering and injustice, St. Josephine Bakhita became a radiant witness of forgiveness, resilience, and hope — a powerful intercessor for all who are oppressed, ignored, persecuted, or exploited today.

She was canonized on October 1, 2000, by **Pope St. John Paul II**, becoming the first Black woman saint of the modern Catholic era. Her feast day, **February 8**, is a call to pray and act for all who suffer oppression and exploitation.

“The Catholic Church intends to intervene in every phase of the trafficking of human beings; she wants to protect them from deception and solicitation; she wants to find them and free them when they are transported and reduced to slavery; she wants to assist them once they are freed.”

- Pope Francis in an interview on February 12, 2018, Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, Vatican.

ACTION: This week, let us reflect on the life of **St. Josephine Bakhita** and recall **Pope Francis’s words** that Christians persecuted today outnumber those in the early centuries. Let us remember and pray for all who, like St. Bakhita, endure persecution, the trauma of war, the pain of displacement, and the struggle to rebuild their lives in unfamiliar places.



The life of St. Josephine Bakhita is a powerful reminder that we are more than the sum total of our circumstances and experiences.

St. Josephine Bakhita’s story contains an important lesson for all of us. In her own words, *“The best thing for us is not what we consider best, but what the Lord wants of us.”*

A film by Giacomo Campiotti (2009)

WEEK 3 CHALLENGE – SCRIPTURE READING

A letter from St. Paul to the Romans 8:35-39

God’s Love in Christ Jesus

³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

St. Paul's words in **Romans 8:35–39** are a **hymn of hope**: nothing - neither persecution, hardship, nor even death - can separate us from the love of Christ. This love is not earned but freely given, and it holds us fast even when life feels overwhelming.

At the same time, **2 Timothy 3:12** *"Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"* reminds us with sober honesty that all who follow Christ will face opposition. Faith does not promise comfort, but it does promise God's presence. In suffering, His grace is enough.

Together, these passages call us to courage and endurance. In a world often hostile to faith, we may experience criticism or even hostility, yet these struggles are not signs of abandonment. They are the very places where Christ's conquering love shines most brightly.

In our increasingly secular culture, where ideologies often stand in opposition to our Catholic faith, we must remain alert and steadfast. Many call what we face today a kind of *"soft persecution."* You may have already felt it — not only in criticism of your faith and values, but even in open hostility. Across the country, dozens of Catholic churches have suffered acts of vandalism this past year, especially because of our pro-life witness.

Today, amid wars, pandemics, personal losses, or quiet doubts, this Beatitude hits hard. It is a lifeline for the weary: your struggles aren't evidence of abandonment; they are the arena where Christ's conquering love shines. As C.S. Lewis put it in *The Problem of Pain*, "God whispers to us in our pleasures... but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." Lean into that promise: victory is already won, and nothing can separate you from the embrace of God.

REFLECTION:

Romans 8:35–39 reminds us that no hardship - whether persecution, famine, or danger - can sever us from the love of God in Christ.

2 Timothy 3:12 soberly acknowledges that all who desire to live faithfully in Christ will face opposition. These two passages together call us to courage and endurance, rooted in God's unshakable love.

PART II: LIVING THE BEATITUDE

WEEK 4 CHALLENGE ~ LIVING THE BEATITUDE AS AN INDIVIDUAL

All the Beatitudes are paradoxical. They bless situations we would not normally call blessed at all: poverty, mourning, meekness, hunger, and thirst. Yet in each one, Jesus reveals a deeper truth - that God's grace is at work in ways the world cannot see.

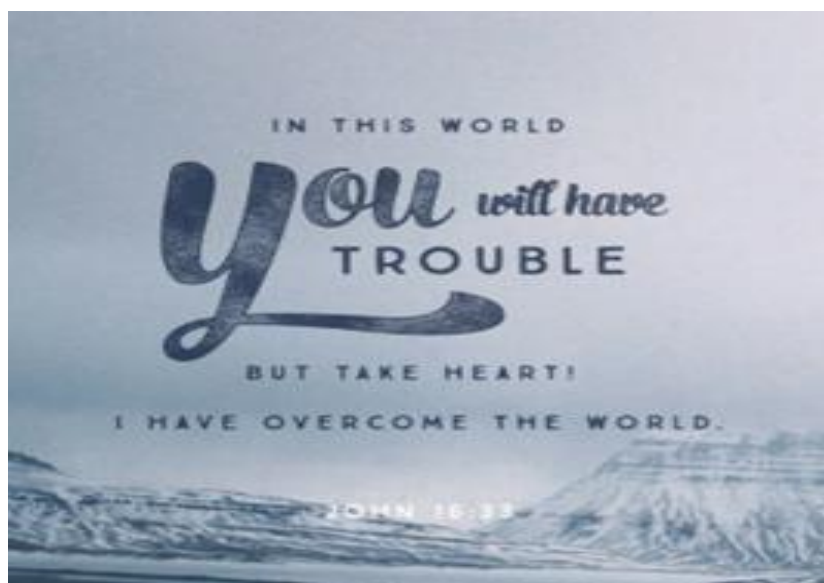
And then, at the very end, the paradox reaches its peak. He says, ***Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*** (Matthew 5:10,11)

Here, the Beatitudes reach their climax: not only is suffering not a curse, but when endured for Christ, it becomes a mark of holiness, a share in the very life of the prophets, and a promise of eternal joy.

This is not easy for us to hear. As individuals, we crave approval because we long to know we matter. But Jesus says, *blessed are you when people reject you for My sake*. Why? Because your worth is not anchored in human opinion - it is rooted in God. So, when the world turns against you, do not fear. Rejoice. It means you are walking with Christ, and your reward is already waiting in heaven.

For each of us personally, this Beatitude carries a sobering but beautiful truth. Our culture often looks at committed Catholics and thinks we are a little out of step - maybe even boring. Faithful marriages, quiet prayer, showing up for Mass every Sunday, choosing humility over fame - none of that seems exciting to the world. This is often the real challenge of our time: not hostility, but indifference. Still, *blessed are we* when people overlook us for living the Gospel. Because God sees what the world does not.

So let us stay faithful - whether the world mocks us for living our faith or simply doesn't notice at all. Because in the quiet perseverance of our faith, heaven takes notice. Let us pray: *"Lord, when we feel forgotten or dismissed for our faith, remind us that You see, You remember, and You rejoice in our faithfulness. Keep us close to You always."*



ACTION FOR THE WEEK

Stand firm in trials: Every insult or rejection for Christ is not defeat but a crown. Rejoice - your reward is eternal.

Take courage: Even indifference or hostility from those around you is a sign that you belong to Christ.

Remember: No act of faithfulness is overlooked by God. In every trial, His presence sustains you, and His promise of eternal joy is secure.

This week, let every challenge become a chance to grow in endurance, deepen your trust, and shine with Christ's love.

WEEK 5 CHALLENGE – LIVING THE BEATITUDE AS A FAMILY

The eighth Beatitude, "*Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account*" is not only a promise for martyrs - it is a **daily call to faithfulness**. Jesus teaches that persecution, rejection, or misunderstanding for His sake is not a curse but a doorway into God's kingdom.

In the family - the "domestic church" - this Beatitude invites us to cultivate undivided hearts, loyal first to God. From that loyalty flows love expressed in sacrifice, forgiveness, and care for one another. When we endure trials together with faith, our homes become places where Christ's reign is revealed, and His love shines most brightly.

Suggested Actions This Week:

- **Prioritize God's Will Daily:** Let Scripture guide your family's rhythms. As the "*domestic church*," nourish decisions - from meals to media to screen time - with God's Word, guarding hearts against distraction.
- **Teach Through Example:** Live forgiveness, generosity, and boundaries. Your witness plants seeds of faith and peace in those closest to you.
- **Foster Vulnerability:** Share stories of biblical families who endured trials like Abraham's long waiting, Joseph's betrayal, Job's suffering, Daniel's courage, and the Holy Family's hardships. Their journeys remind us that honest conversations about our own challenges can build empathy, strengthen unity, and deepen resilience within our families.
- **Practice the Examen:** Pause each day to ask, "*What honours Christ here?*" Invite the Holy Spirit into your family's activities and gently surrender daily habits to God's wisdom.
- **Weave the Word into Daily Life:** Let Sunday's homily spark conversation during the week. Use the Rosary and Scripture as steady guides for choices—especially for teens navigating the world of social media.
- **Serve Beyond Your Walls:** As a family, volunteer, advocate for justice, and stand with Christ in the secular world beyond the church walls—even when it brings challenge or pushback.



WEEK 6 CHALLENGE – LIVING THE BEATITUDE AS A COMMUNITY

Living the Eighth Beatitude as a Catholic Community: Righteousness in the Face of Revile

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account." (Matthew 5:10-11)

As a parish and community, we are called to live this Beatitude together - not as isolated heroes, but as a united witness. In Catholic life, "*persecution on my account*" can mean cultural sidelining. In debates over life issues—such as MAID or abortion, which violate the sacredness of human life and dignity - or in discussions about marriage and mercy in a polarized age, we are often tested. Yet we are not victims. We are victors, heirs of the Kingdom, a reality already present among us (CCC 541).

Through shared prayer, bold service, and solidarity, we cultivate a community heart centered on Christ. Living faithfully may be costly, but in this tension, the Church becomes ***a sign and instrument of communion*** (*Gaudium et Spes* 39). As St. Oscar Romero, the martyred Archbishop of San Salvador, said, ***"Aspire not to have more, but to be more"*** - together.

Practical Pathways: From Parish to Public Square

We live this Beatitude through intentional, communal rhythms. Here's a potential framework, inspired by the Church's social doctrine and synodal spirit (*Synod on Synodality*, emphasizing listening and walking together):

Aspect of Community Life	How to Live the Beatitude	Scriptural & Catholic Anchor
Liturgical Worship	Gather for Mass as a bold act of praise. Include intercessions for the persecuted; close with a "Beatitude blessing," lifting up those who face ridicule at work, school, or in daily life, and praying that they may remain steadfast in righteousness	<i>"Where two or three are gathered..."</i> (Matt 18:20); CCC 1349—Eucharist as source of missionary zeal.
Formation & Catechesis	Leverage ministries like RCIA or the Divine Mercy Cenacle to focus on the Beatitude, sharing stories of modern witnesses to persecution, such as St. Josephine Bakhita, St. Maximilian Kolbe, the Canadian Martyrs.	James 1:5 (wisdom's prayer); <i>Dei Verbum</i> (21)—Scripture as communal light.
Service & Solidarity	Imagine your parish as a "field hospital" (Pope Francis's metaphor). Draw from the Church's tradition—think St. Vincent de Paul's model of organized, prayerful aid and corporal acts of mercy—to make this sustainable	Matt 25:35-40; <i>Laudato Si'</i> (49)—care for creation as righteous stand against exploitation.
Public Witness & Advocacy	March together for life, justice, or peace, prepared for revile (train in nonviolent response via <i>Pax Christi</i>). Use social media as a "digital pulpit" for truth (per <i>Christifideles Laici</i> 44) for sharing homilies laced with charity and forgiveness, making the Gospel's truth viral.	Acts 4:19-20 (<i>"We cannot but speak"</i>); CCC 2244-2246—duty to society without compromise.
Internal Healing & Support	Create safe spaces for lament (e.g., prayer vigils for those hurt by intra-Church scandals). Celebrate "persecution milestones" and any policy wins, affirming: "Your faithfulness builds the kingdom."	Rom 8:37 (<i>more than conquerors</i>); St. Thérèse's "little way"—small acts amid big trials.

These aren't checkboxes; they're woven into our DNA as the *communio sanctorum*—saints in solidarity, past and present.

WEEK 7 CHALLENGE – BLESSINGS RECEIVED & CLOSING PRAYER

As our reflection on the eighth Beatitude and Jesus' piercing words *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account"* draws to a close, we stand at the threshold of a profound grace.

The Kingdom's Promise: Blessed Together

Jesus' words end with hope: the kingdom is *ours* - a communal inheritance where persecution purifies, not destroys (*1 Pet 1:6-7*). In our trials, we glimpse heaven's banquet, inseparable from God's love (*Rom 8:39*). As St. John Paul II proclaimed in *Veritatis Splendor* (91), this righteousness "sets us free" for deeper communion.

As this reflection drifts over us like incense after Vespers, let us carry its flame: let righteousness be our compass, forgiveness our banner, the Kingdom our quiet certainty. In every revile met with a smile, in every falsely spoken evil absorbed in prayer, we claim the blessing - not for our own glory, but for the glory of Him who first endured it all."

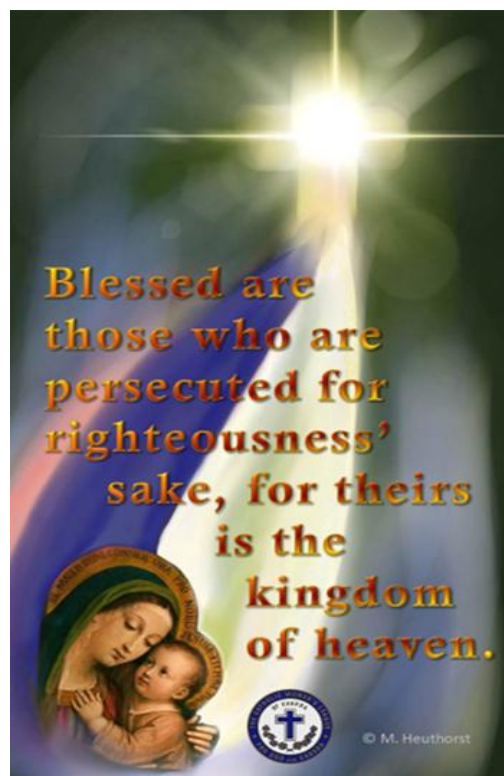
A Closing Prayer for the Blessed Persecuted

Lord Jesus, who crowned the cross with glory, bind our hearts to Yours in the daring embrace of this final Beatitude. In times of persecution, when we are called to stand for what is right, pour forth the Spirit's wisdom (*James 1:5*) and a peace that does not waver. Let our families, our communities, and our witness blaze like lamps in the gathering dusk, guiding all toward Your kingdom, now and forever. Amen.

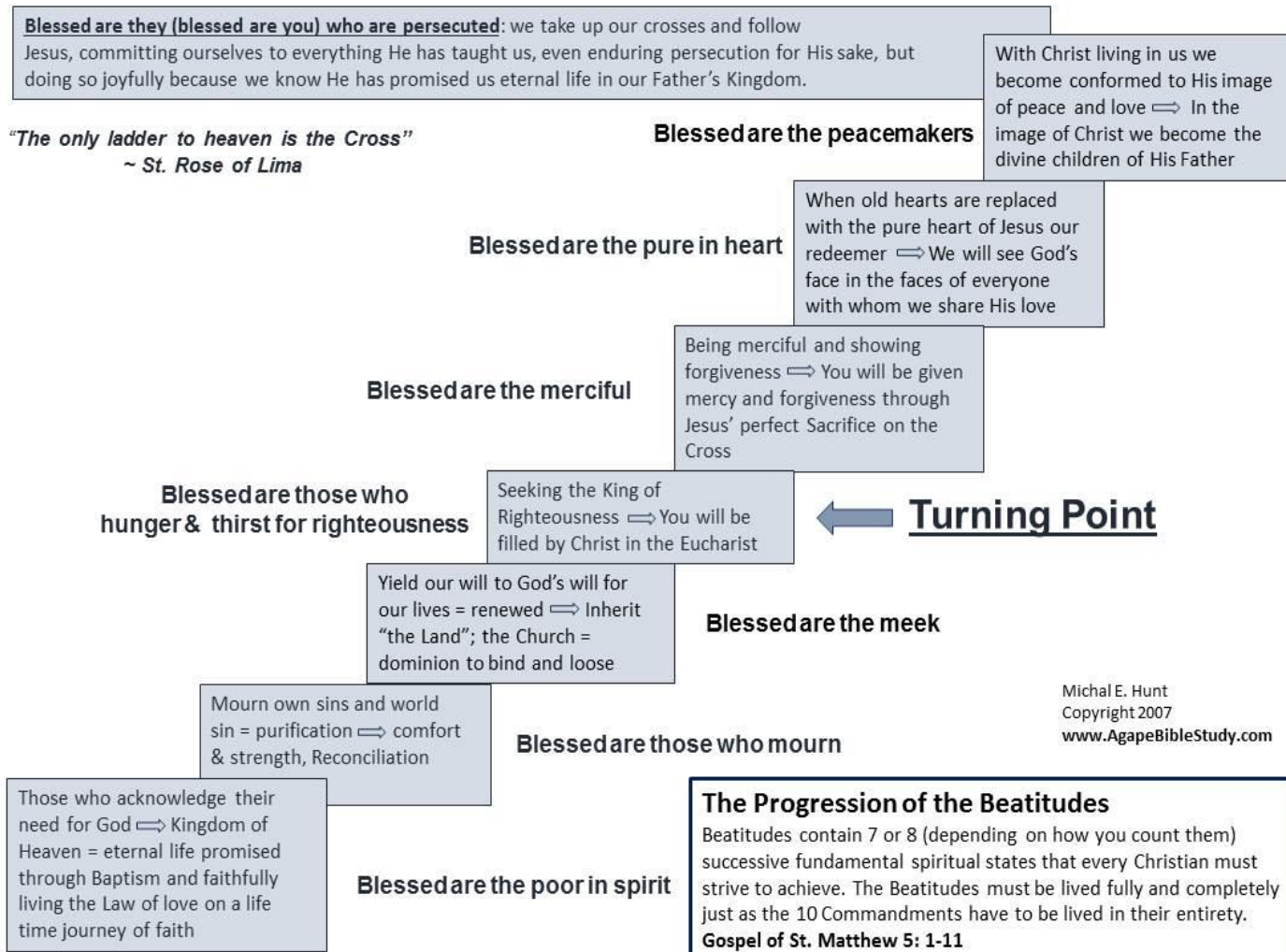


**Teach me your way, O Lord,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to
revere your name.**

(Psalm 86:11)



THE BEATITUDE LADDER



To learn about the Catholic Women's League
please visit our parish website at
www.divineinfant.on.ca/cwl.html



Catholic Women's League
Divine Infant Parish
Orleans ON

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