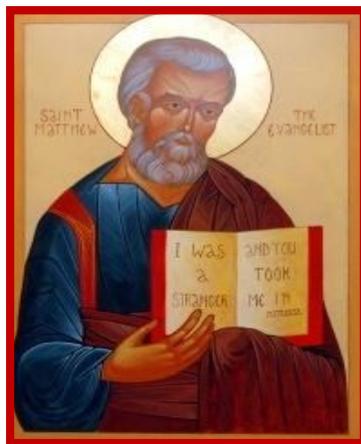


This grief too has its own degrees, like the rest of the Beatitudes. They are here called *blessed mourners*, who bear with patience the troubles and sorrows sent, or permitted to come upon them by God. So Nyssen, *de Beatitud.* But more blessed are they who mourn and weep on account of their own or others' sins. And most blessed are they who through grief at the perpetual struggle which they carry on with the flesh and concupiscence, and through desire of the celestial country, and especially through love of God and Christ, lament their exile in this earthly land. Thus Paul mourned, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" In this grief S. Ephraim excelled, who mourns in all his writings, and inspires his readers with holy grief and compunction. S. Macarius, as his Life records, was wont to say to his brethren, "Let us weep, brothers, let our eyes run down with tears before we go where our tears shall burn our flesh." And they all wept. For tears wash us in this world but burn us after death.

*For they shall be comforted.* Often in this life, but always in the life to come. As Isaiah says (xxxv. 10), "Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Truly does compunction itself wonderfully solace and refresh the mind of him who is pricked with compunction. And if there be unadulterated joy in the world, it is in the contrite mind. Taste, and thou shalt see, for as the heart knoweth his own bitterness, so there is a joy with which a stranger intermeddleth not. So S. Jerome describing the departure of S. Paula, exclaims, "O blessed exchange! She wept to laugh always: she beheld pools of contrition that she might find the Lord her fountain: she was clothed in sackcloth that now she might wear white robes, and say, 'Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.' She ate ashes as it were bread, and mingled her drink with weeping, saying, 'My tears have been my meat day and night,' that now she might feed for ever on angels' bread, and sing, 'O taste and see how sweet the Lord is.'"



For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapse's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapse's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

## Matthew Chapter 5: 1-5

Douay Rheims Version

*Christ's sermon upon the mount. The eight beatitudes.*

1. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, and when he was set down, his disciples came unto him.
2. And opening his mouth he taught them, saying:
3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4. Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.
5. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

the world which is to be subjected to Christ after the general judgment, as His inheritance, and therefore to the meek as His fellow heirs. For after the judgment, the whole universe—that is, both the heavens and the earth—will be renewed and glorified, and made the possession of Christ and His saints.

A certain holy man, says Salmeron, once said, pleasantly, "Heaven is given to the humble, and earth to the meek; what remains to the proud and the cruel except the misery of hell?"

*Anagogically*, Hilary says, "To the meek is promised the inheritance of the earth—*i.e.*, of that body which the Lord assumed as his habitation, because through the meekness of our minds Christ dwelleth in us, and we also, when we are glorified, shall be clothed with the glory of His body." And S. Leo (*Serm. in Fest. Omn. Sanct.*) says, "The land promised to the meek, and to be given in possession to the gentle, is the flesh of the saints, which, as the desert of their humility, shall be changed at the blessed Resurrection, and endowed with the grace of immortality. For the meek shall possess that land in perfect peace, and nothing shall ever be diminished of their rights, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality."

Finally, the way of attaining to meekness is often to meditate upon its dignity and profit, and upon the unworthiness and un-profitableness of anger. Whence Clement of Alexandria says, that Athenodorus gave this advice to the Emperor Augustus, that if he were angry he should never do or say anything until he had said over to himself the twenty-four letters of the alphabet. "If," said he, "thou art of a lofty mind, a prince is superior to all injuries." Augustus despised the tales of detractors, "For," said he, "in a free State the tongue should be free."

A better way is, to consider the example of those who are meek, and to follow them, but especially the example of Christ crucified, of whom Isaiah foretold (chap. liii.), "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb before its shearers, he shall make himself dumb."

**Verse 5-** *Blessed are they that mourn.* Arabic, *the sad*, who mourn, not in flesh but in spirit. For the words, *in spirit*, are to be understood and repeated in all these Beatitudes. Blessed are they that mourn, not for the loss of wealth, or parents, or friends, but of spiritual things. Grief here is taken as belonging to the saints. It is opposed to those who laugh and overflow with joy on account of mundane prosperity, those whom the world applauds as blessed. To them Christ threatens *woe*. "Woe to you which laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep." There is an allusion to Isaiah lxxv. 14, "Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed," &c.

4. To rejoice in such things.

5. By our meekness and kindness to overcome the malevolence of our enemies and those who are angry with us, and win them to be our friends.

*For they shall possess, &c. Gr. κληρονομήσουσι, i.e., shall possess by inheritance. S. Augustine and the Arabic have shall inherit. The Syriac, shall possess the earth by the right of inheritance. Appositely does Christ promise the earth to the meek, because the meek are often despoiled by the quarrelsome of the goods of the earth. This injury therefore Christ makes up to them by this Beatitude. But what earth does He mean?*

1. S. Chrysostom, Euthymius, Theophylact, and S. Augustine, say that the present earth is here promised to the meek, in this way. The world calls blessed those who are strong and who avenge themselves; but I say, Blessed are the meek, and they who bear with patience the good things of this world being torn from them, because although such persons are often oppressed by the world, yet they do often also, by the gift of God, possess their own, firmly and quietly. Or if not, yet the whole world is the meek man's country. There is an allusion to Moses who was the meekest of men, and who by his meekness obtained for the Hebrews from God the possession of the promised land. This sense is true, but neither full nor adequate. It often fails. We often see the meek deprived of their possessions by the quarrelsome. We may add that Moses promised earthly goods to the Jews, but Christ promised heavenly things to Christians.

Better and fuller with S. Jerome (*in loc.*), Nyssen. (*lib. De Beat., Orat. 2*), S. Basil (on Psalm xiv.), Cyril (*in cap. 58. Isaiah*), by earth in this place, understand heaven, which is the land of the living, as this our earth is the land of the dying, as it is said in Psalm xxvii. "I believed verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." And Psalm cxlii., "Thou art my hope and my portion in the land of the living."

For in heaven, indeed, is a land not dense, opaque, and earthy, but pure and lustrous. There is the Paradise of roses and lilies, of gems and all delights which refresh the senses of the blessed, for were it not so, the bodies and senses of the blessed, which in this life suffered such dire and awful martyrdoms, would go without their own deserts of pleasure, and only their minds and souls be blessed, which is absurd. Whence S. John beheld, (in Rev. xxi. and xxii.) a heavenly city which was foursquare, whose foundations were laid with jasper and every precious stone. Hence also the Pythagoreans, as Clement of Alexandria tells us (*lib. 5 Stromat.*), speak of heaven as ἀντίχθονα, *i.e.*, the land over against, or opposed to our earth. I say nothing of those philosophers who think that the moon and the stars are inhabited, that there are in the moon populous cities and vast regions inhabited by men called *Lunares*, from *Luna*, as Macrobius says, *lib. 1 in Somn. Scipionis*. See also what Plato says, *in Convivio*.

By every one of the Beatitudes the kingdom of heaven is promised, but under various names and titles. And yet again, by *earth* in this place we may understand the *new earth*, which is spoken of (Isa. lxx. 17; Rev. xxi. 1, 2; and 2 Pet. iii. 13) as that globe of

6. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.

7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8. Blessed are the clean of heart: they shall see God.

9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake:

12. Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.

13. You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing anymore but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men.

14. You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid.

15. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house.

16. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

17. Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

18. For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.

19. He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20. For I tell you, that unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

21. You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment.

22. But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

23. If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee;

24. Leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift.

25. Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him: lest perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

26. Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing.

27. You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery.

28. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.

29. And if thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than thy whole body be cast into hell.

30. And if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body go into hell.

31. And it hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorce.

32. But I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, excepting the cause of fornication, maketh her to commit adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.

33. Again you have heard that it was said to them of old, thou shalt not forswear thyself: but thou shalt perform thy oaths to the Lord.

34. But I say to you not to swear at all, neither by heaven for it is the throne of God:

35. Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king:

36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37. But let your speech be yea, yea: no, no: and that which is over and above these, is of evil.

38. You have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

39. But I say to you not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other:

40. And if a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him.

41. And whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two.

42. Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away.

43. You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy.

44. But I say to you, Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you:

45. That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good, and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust.

46. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this?

47. And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens this?

48. Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.

with God in all felicity and glory, through all eternity. The word *kingdom* here signifies,

1. The abundance of all good things in heaven.
2. The high dignity wherewith the blessed are honoured by the Holy Trinity and all angels.
3. Their regal dignity. For the blessed are kings, who reign not over one Spain, or one Asia, or even over all the earth, but over the whole universe; that is, over all the elements of the sky, over the plants and animals. This empire they have won by their poverty of spirit, wherewith they put under them all earthly goods and desires, where, wearing their golden crowns, they sing joyfully for ever to Christ. "Thou hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests, and we shall reign upon the earth." (Rev. v. 10, Vulg.) The kingdom of heaven then is the kingdom of God, for the blessed possess the same kingdom which God himself possesses, and in it most happily and most gloriously reign with him eternally.

**Verse 4- Blessed are the meek.**

This is the second Beatitude in the Latin Vulgate followed by SS. Jerome and Augustine, and the rest of the Latin Fathers. But in the Greek Codices, in the Syriac and Arabic versions, followed by S. Chrysostom and the other Greek Fathers it is the third Beatitude, the second with them being, *Blessed are they that mourn*.

Congruously to the poor in spirit the meek are joined because the poor and lowly are wont to be meek, as *vice versâ* the rich are proud and often impatient and quarrelsome. Poverty and meekness are neighbours, and related virtues. Whence the Hebrew words עני *ani*, "poor," ענין *anan*, "meek," are kindred words. Chromatius adds, "A man cannot be meek unless he be first poor in spirit." He gives the reason, "There cannot be a calm sea unless the winds are stilled. A fire is not put out unless you withdraw the materials by which it burns. So too the mind will not be meek and quiet unless the things which excite and inflame it be put away." The meek are they who are gentle, humble, modest, simple in faith, patient under all injury, who set themselves to follow the precepts of the gospel and the example of the saints. Christ here alludes to Ps. xxxvii. 11, "The meek-spirited shall possess the earth, and shall be refreshed with the multitude of peace." Meekness, therefore, 1. Makes us pleasing to God and men. 2. Like Christ, who says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." 3. Apt for wisdom and gaining celestial goods. For these the meek heart is fitted to receive, according to what the Psalm says, "Them that are meek shall he guide in judgment, and such as are gentle them shall he learn his way."

The grades of meekness and the Beatitude consequent upon it are these:

1. To converse with all with a meek heart and lips.
2. To break the anger of others by a meek reply.
3. To bear with gentleness all injuries and wrongs.

“Having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” Wherefore Climacus (*Gradu* 17) does not hesitate to affirm that a poor monk is the lord of the world, and through faith possesses all nations as his servants. And he adds that a poor servant of God loves nothing wrongly, for all things which he has, or can have, he reckons as though they were not, and if it chance that they depart, he counts them as dung. Hear S. Bernard (*Serm. 21 in Cant.*): “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Let not men suppose that they possess only heavenly things, because they hear them only named in the promise. They possess earthly things likewise, and indeed as though having nothing and yet possessing all things, the less they desire the more are they masters.

Lastly, to a believer there is a whole world of riches. A whole world, indeed, because both prosperous and adverse things are equally his servants, and work together for his good. And so, a covetous man hungers after earthly things like a beggar, the believer despises them as a master. The one by possessing loses, the other by despising keeps. S. Chrysostom gives the reason (*Hom. 57, ad pop.*): “God is the poor man’s steward.” And S. Francis lays it down in his Rule thus: —“This evangelical poverty is the foundation of our Order. On this the whole superstruction of our Order primarily rests, that by its abiding firm, the Order may be firm; and if it be overturned the Order will be entirely overthrown. In so far therefore as the friars shall decline from poverty, the world shall decline from them. If they embrace my Lady Poverty, the world will feed them, because they are sent for the salvation of the world. There is a bargain between the world and the friars. They owe the world a good example: the world owes them necessary provision. And when becoming false to their trust, they fail to set a good example, the world, as a just censure, will draw back its hand.” And indeed it is as good as a great and perpetual miracle to see so many religious men and women of the Order of S. Francis—for in the whole world they number quite a million—who have made profession of poverty, who live honestly and suitably on the alms of the faithful. Truly in this does the Providence of God over His own poor shine gloriously. Here is fulfilled that saying of the Psalmist which S. Francis gave to his brothers as their *viaticum* in daily life—“Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He will nourish thou.” And “They that be rich, want and are hungry, but they that seek the Lord shall not be lacking in any good.”

Observe, Christ does not say *the kingdom of heaven shall be given them, or shall be theirs*, but theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven, in this present time. That is to say, “By my promise and God’s decree the kingdom of heaven pertains to them, they have a complete right to it, and so they are sure of entering into it, as sure as though they held it in their hands, and were already reigning in it as kings.” For so firm is the hope of the promises of God, that by it the faithful as it were hold in their hands the thing promised, according to Heb. xi. 1, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for,” faith, that is, which makes the celestial goods, for which he hopes, subsist in the mind of a believer. For in this way he realizes them to himself, as it were, substantially shows them to himself

*The kingdom of heaven.* The celestial blessedness is so called, where the blessed reign

**Verse 1-** *Went up into a mountain.* Let us inquire what mountain this was? “Some simple brethren,” says S. Jerome, “think that Christ taught the Beatitudes, and the things which follow, on the mount of Olives. But that was not so.” For from what precedes and follows in the Gospel the place must have been in Galilee; in our opinion Tabor, or a similarly lofty mountain. Geographies of the Holy Land, such as Brochard’s *Itinerary*, say that this mountain is called “Mons Christi,” because Christ was wont to pray and preach upon it. It lies westward of Capernaum, three miles distant; it is not far from the Sea of Galilee, and is close to the city of Bethsaida. Its height is so great that from it may be seen the land of Zebulon and Naphthali, Trachonitis, Ituræa, Shenir, Hermon, and Libanus. It is carpeted with grass and flowers. Here Christ spent whole nights in prayer. Here He called to Him His disciples, and chose twelve of their number whom He ordained and called apostles. Here He taught that compendium of the new law which is called the Sermon on the Mount. Adrichomius says the stone on which Christ sat to preach may still be seen.

Observe, Matthew wished to commence with the preaching of Christ, and to deliver the sum of it at the beginning of his Gospel, which he did by giving an account of this discourse, although it was actually preached some considerable time after. For many events preceded it, which he relates subsequently. The sequence of the history was as follows:—After Christ had restored the hand of a certain man which was withered, on the Sabbath day (Matt. xii. 15), He fled from the anger of the Scribes, and betook Himself to the Sea of Galilee. Here a vast multitude of people flocked to Him, and after He had healed many who were sick, He went up into a mountain, where He remained the whole night in prayer. In the morning He appointed the twelve Apostles (Luke vi. 12). When He had done this He came down from the top of the mountain to a lower level, and there He delivered the sermon which follows, partly to His disciples and partly to the whole multitude. That the people were present at it is plain from chap. vii. 28. Moreover, that this is the same sermon of which S. Luke gives an account in his sixth chapter is clear, because the general thread of each is the same, and because they have the same commencement and the same conclusion. For although Matthew has eight Beatitudes and Luke only four, yet in the eight of the former are comprised the four of the latter; and in S. Luke’s four S. Matthew’s eight are contained.

Moreover, Matthew puts off the vocation of the Apostles, which preceded the sermon, to the tenth chapter; for not as yet has he related his own calling by Christ, which he gives in chap. ix. But it is certain that Matthew as well as the other Apostles was present at the sermon. This sermon was delivered about the middle of May, and the choosing of the Apostles had taken place on the morning of the same day, in Christ’s thirty-second year, and the second year of His ministry.

**Verse 2-** *And opening his mouth.* To *open the mouth* is the Hebrew idiom for *to speak*. But there is an emphasis in the expression in this place. It means that Christ opened out sublime things—things great and wonderful, and Divine mysteries—concerning which He had hitherto kept silence. So S. Hilary. S. Bernard says, “He opened now His mouth, who afore had opened the mouths of the prophets. Truly was His mouth opened, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

**Verse 3-** *Blessed are the poor in spirit.* Christ commences His discourse with a Beatitude which all seek and covet, though but few find; as David also begins his Book of Psalms, “Blessed is the man,” &c.

*Blessed, I say, are the poor in spirit,* in hope, not as yet of right; blessed are they in the blessedness of the way, not of the country; blessed in the beginning of peace, of virtue, not in the consummation of the crown of glory. Beatitude, says Nyssen, is the special endowment of God; when therefore Christ makes blessed the poor in spirit, He makes them partakers of divinity.

Our Lord alludes here to the words of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 29), “Blessed art thou, O Israel, what people is like unto thee, who art saved by the Lord?” For the poor in spirit are Israel, the elect people who place their hope, their riches, their salvation and happiness in the Lord. For because they despise the riches of earth, and are lords over them, therefore are they Israel, lords with God and in heaven. Moreover, Isidore (lib. 10, *Orig. Litera B.*) says, “Blessed means increased. He is said to be blessed who has what he desires, and does not suffer what he would not. He then is truly blessed who has all good things for which he wishes, and who does not wish for anything which is evil.” So also Varro (lib. 4, *de ling. Lat.*), “He is said to be blessed who possesses many good things, as *dives*, ‘rich,’ comes from *divus*, ‘a god,’ as one who, like God, wants for nothing.” And what are the real goods Christ here shows—poverty of spirit, meekness, holy grief, &c.; for they who have these things are blessed, and therefore they always rejoice. Whence Aristotle derives the Greek word *μακάριος*, happy, or blessed, from *χαίρειν*, to rejoice, because he who is blessed is always rejoicing.

These eight Beatitudes are, as it were, the eight paradoxes of the world. For the world and philosophers place blessedness in wealth, not in poverty, in loftiness, not in humility, &c. Whence S. Ambrose says, “According to the Divine judgment blessedness begins where man deems misery to begin.” Says S. Bernard, “The Truth speaks, which can neither deceive nor be deceived. It is the Truth which says, *blessed are the poor in spirit*. Are ye so senseless, O ye sons of Adam, as so greatly to seek for riches and desire riches, when the Beatitude of the poor has been commended and preached to the world by the mouth of God? Let the heathen, who live without God, seek for riches; let the Jews, who believe in earthly promises, seek them; but with what face can a Christian seek them, after Christ has preached, *Blessed are the poor?*” Gregory Nazianzen too says, “The riches of monks are in their poverty, their possessions in pilgrimage, their glory in contempt, their strength in weakness, their fruitfulness in celibacy; who have nothing in the world, and who live above the world; who, in the flesh, live out of the flesh; who have the Lord for their portion; who, on

the world, or rather sporting with the world, and making it a laughing-stock. In a later age S. Benedict, S. Bernard, but above all S. Francis, embraced poverty, and taught their disciples to embrace it. S. Francis made it the foundation of his Order. In all his discourses he spoke of it now as his mother, now as his wife, his lady; often, too, he called it his queen, because it had shone with such glorious refulgence in Christ the King of kings, and in His Mother. Hear what he solemnly enjoins upon his friars in his Rule, c. 6: “Let the brothers appropriate nothing to themselves, neither house, nor place, nor anything; but as pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility, let them ask boldly for alms. Neither need they be ashamed, for the Lord made Himself poor for us in this world. This is that sublimity of the deepest poverty which constitutes you, my dearest brethren, heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven. Let this be your portion, which leads you to the land of the living. And, my dearly beloved brethren, cleaving wholly to this, wish, for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to have nothing else for ever under heaven.”

The same S. Francis, exulting in destitution, prayed for it with such fervour that fire seemed to shine from his face. “For this,” said he, “is the virtue flowing into us from heaven, which so orders and informs us that we gladly trample upon all earthly things, and which removes every obstacle so that the mind of man may be most freely and speedily united to the Lord God. It is poverty which makes a man’s soul, while it is yet upon earth, hold converse with the angels in heaven. It is this which has fellowship with Christ on His Cross, which is buried with Him in His tomb, which with Him rises again and ascends into heaven. It is this which grants to the souls which love it the power, even in this life, of flying above the heavens, and bestows pinions of humility and charity. Let us go forward, then, to ask the holy Apostles that they will obtain this grace for us from the Lord Jesus Christ, that He, the chief cultivator of poverty, would deign to bestow it upon us.”

And as S. Francis lived, so he died, for, divesting himself of his outer garments, he lay upon the earth, saying, “I have done with what is mine, what is yours; may Christ instruct you.” Then a brother, who stood by, foreseeing by a divine instinct his death and zeal for poverty, offered him his cord with femorals, and said, “These I lend thee, as a beggar, and do thou receive them by the mandate of holy obedience.” With joy did the holy man take them, and, lifting up his hands to heaven, gave thanks to Christ, because, having put off every burden, he was going free to Him, and because, as in life, so in death, he was conformed to Christ crucified, who hung naked upon the Cross.

*For theirs,* &c.—It is just and congruous that those who for the love of Christ despise the riches of the earthly kingdom should be recompensed with the wealth of the heavenly kingdom, yea indeed, of an earthly kingdom, which by despising they possess and rule, according to the saying of S. Paul,

the fifth of counsel; the third and the sixth of counsel, or of precept, according to circumstances.

You will ask, secondly, why Christ assigns to poverty of spirit the first place among the evangelical Beatitudes? I answer, the first reason is *à priori*, because this poverty overturns and destroys covetousness, which is the root and well-spring of all evil. (1 Tim. vi. 10.) Wherefore this poverty restores man, as it were, to the state of innocence, in which nothing was his own, but all things were common to all. For the whole world was Adam's and his children's, that from it they might acknowledge, love, and praise God, there being no assertion of property, which is the root of cupidity, quarrels and law-suits. "With the poor, therefore," says S. Gregory, "what the superfluity of very slight pravity defiles, the furnace of poverty purifies."

The second reason is, because this poverty releases men from a thousand distractions and anxious cares which riches, and the desire of riches, bring with them. Wherefore, "poverty is a tranquil harbour," says S. Chrysostom; "it is the training ground, the gymnasium of wisdom." Here comes in that reason of S. Gregory's (*Hom. 32 in Evang.*) that "naked with the naked (demons) we must wrestle; for if one who is clothed wrestle with one who is naked, he will soon be cast down to the ground, because he has that by which he may be laid hold of. For what are all earthly things but bodily habiliments, as it were? Let him, therefore, who is about to contend with the devil cast off his garments lest he be worsted. Let him possess nothing in this world by desire; let him require no delectations of fleeting things, lest, where his desires keep him, there he be held until he fall."

Third. Because this poverty causes a man to withdraw himself from all created things, and makes him rest entirely with all his hopes in God his Creator. In the full and perfect love of God, the summit of virtue and the true blessedness of this life consist. Wherefore, S. Bonaventura writes, in his Life of S. Francis, that when he was often asked by his brethren which was the virtue which especially commends us to Christ our Lord, and makes us pleasing to Him, he was wont to reply with more than his usual energy, "Poverty, for it is the way of salvation, the incentive to humility, the root of perfection; and from it there spring many fruits, though they be hidden and known to but few."

These are the causes why Christ taught us this poverty of spirit both by word and example. Thus did the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, the Essenes, yea all the first Christians, of whom it was said (Acts iv. 32), "Neither said any of them that ought which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." Indeed, they vowed this; wherefore Ananias and Sapphira, who broke this vow, were punished by the Apostle Peter with sudden death.

There followed in holy poverty apostolic men and prelates, SS. Anthony, Augustine, Basil, Chrysostom, Jerome, and S. Alexius, who, by an example uncommon in the world, relinquished ample riches, a bride, and poor and a stranger followed Christ, a poor man, to Syria—as it were, a pilgrim upon earth and a citizen of heaven; and at last lived and died unrecognized in his father's house, being made a laughing-stock to

account of the kingdom, labour in poverty, and, on account of poverty, are kings." When Simeon Stylites was a keeper of sheep, he heard these Beatitudes of Christ read in church, and straightway he left his sheep and entered a monastery. By-and-by he ascended a pillar, and stood upon it, day and night, eating little, and becoming a wonder to the world, that he might attain to these Beatitudes. The same Simeon was wont to preach twice a day to the crowds who flocked to his pillar, saying only these words—"Despise earthly things; love and desire only heavenly things, which alone will make you blessed." So Theodoret, an eye and ear-witness, testifies in his Life of S. Simeon.

*Blessed are the poor.* Not all poor; not those who are poor by a pitiable necessity against their will; not they who are poor from vain glory, or from a desire to be at liberty for the pursuit of philosophy, like Diogenes, or that Crates of Thebes, who, as S. Jerome says, threw a vast weight of gold into the sea, saying, "Begone, wicked pleasures, I sink you, that I may not be made to sink by you." But it is the poor in spirit who are blessed, who have a will inspired by the Holy Ghost, tending to spiritual goods. It is poverty voluntarily undertaken for the sake of God and the kingdom of heaven. Note, there are three sorts of poor. 1. Those who are so actually, as beggars. 2. In spirit, but not actually, as Abraham, who was rich in fact, poor in spirit. 3. Both in fact and in spirit, as the religious, who vow poverty from love and affection for it, and who divest themselves of all their worldly goods. "Do you wish to know," says Nyssen (*lib. de Beatitud.*), "who is poor in spirit? It is he who exchanges corporeal opulence for the riches of the soul, who is poor for the sake of the spirit, who has thrown off earthly riches like a heavy load, and who would be borne aloft through the air to be with God. If, then, it behoves us to advance to the things above, we must needs be poor and needy in the things which drag us down, that we may become conversant with things supernal."

The word *spirit* signifies three things:—

1. It is opposed to the flesh, and signifies that the subject of this poverty is not the body, but the spirit—that is to say, the will. In this sense spirit is often used in Scripture. As S. Paul (Rom. i. 9), "God is my witness, whom I serve in the spirit." And Christ says (S. John iv.), "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in *spirit* and in truth"—meaning, that God must be worshipped, not with outward ceremonies, but with the inward spirit, and with devotion of the mind, according to the saying of Cato—"If God be Mind, as poets tell, Then with the mind we worship well."

So also S. Bernard says, "The poor in spirit—*i.e.*, with the will of the spirit, with spiritual intention and spiritual desire, for the alone sake of pleasing God, and the salvation of souls. And Christ uses this expression, *in spirit*, because of those who are poor by a miserable necessity, not by a laudable will."

2. It is what S. Augustine says, “A rich man, who is able to despise in himself whatsoever there is in him by which pride can be puffed up, is God’s poor man.” And S. Jerome says, “The poor in spirit are they who are voluntarily poor because of the Holy Spirit.”
3. *In spirit* signifies the end of this poverty—namely, that the contempt of wealth be referred to the spirit, that, being freed from earthly things, we may the better reach forward to heavenly things.

The root and foundation of blessedness and evangelical perfection are voluntary poverty and humility, just as the root of all sin is pride and covetousness.

Admirably says S. Cyprian (*Tract. de Nativ. Christi*), “The poor are elected, the proud neglected. Neither haughtiness nor any such thing obtains a place of discipleship near to Christ. Christ, the poor man, despises rich disciples. A poor mother, a poor son, a poor hospice, give plain evidence to those who are exercised in the school of Christ’s Church.”

Lastly, S. Bernard (*Serm. 1 de Omn. Sanc.*): “Consider how prudently Wisdom hath ordained, appointing the first remedy against the first sin, as though she said plainly, ‘Wilt thou obtain heaven which the proud angel lost, he who trusted in his strength and in the multitude of his riches? embrace the lowliness of poverty, and it shall be thine.’”

*Anagogically.* Francis of Sales, lately Bishop of Geneva, a man equally wise, pious, and holy, says (lib. 12 *Theot.*, c. 2), “The poor, or beggars in spirit are those who beg—*i.e.*, who have an insatiable hunger and thirst for the Spirit—that is, for increase of love and zeal for God, that He may ever grow and burn in them with constant increase.” Hence I have heard the passage expounded thus: *Blessed are the poor in spirit—i.e.*, blessed are they who are towards God as beggars to the rich, namely those who with as great humility of spirit confess their poverty, and with as much earnestness beg for grace from God, as beggars ask an alms from the rich. Whence S. Chrysostom says, beggars teach us how to pray and ask help of God. By showing their wounds and afflicted limbs they excite compassion.

With sound sense does our Lewis (*de ponte, part 3, Medit. 2*), give these three degrees of poverty of spirit, that is, of humility. The first is to put off and purify the mind from every blast and breath of vanity, and from all vain and inflated presumption, despising all the pomps of the world. The second, that I should divest myself of all desire to call things my own, by entirely unclothing myself of my own opinions, my own will and other desires. The third and last act of poverty is so to empty myself, make myself so poor that I have nothing at all of my own, but only what God freely gives me. For I have not even so much as *to be*, my own, but it is of God, without whom I am not. Of myself, therefore, I have nothing else than the nothingness of nature—*i.e.*, *not to be*, and the negation of grace—*i.e.*, *sin*.

1. You will inquire whether this poverty of spirit be a precept, or an evangelical counsel? And,

2. How many degrees and kinds of it there are? I answer, it has various degrees, some of counsel, some of precept. The first and highest is to forsake all riches, all transitory things for the sake of the love and imitation of Christ, with inward purpose as well as outward deed, like the Apostles and religious. This degree is of counsel, not of precept. The second is to bear patiently the confiscation of goods for the sake of Christ and the orthodox faith, which is a kind of martyrdom; for he who takes away the means necessary for the support of life, takes away life itself. This is what many rich and nobly born Catholics are suffering this day in England, who would prefer death to the spoiling of their goods. For it is a hard thing indeed to deprive not only yourself but your children and all your posterity of their hereditary possessions, and the rank and position of their ancestors, and reduce all to poverty and obscurity. But all the more honour to them who do it for Christ’s sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Such, too, were the Hebrew Christians whom the Apostle praises, “Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing that ye have a better and an enduring substance.” (Heb. x. 34.)

This degree is of precept, for we are bound for the sake of Christ and the Faith, not only to lose our goods, but to shed our blood.

The third grade of poverty is to bear patiently the spoiling of our goods, or any injustice done to us by those who are powerful, and tyrants, as when any one loses a just suit on behalf of an estate, or other things, because of the power or tyranny of his opponents.

The fourth is when wealth is given to any one by God, not to care for it, to give it up in intention, to be prepared to forsake it if that should be for the greater glory of God. In this grade was Abraham, rich in respect of actual possessions, but poor in spirit.

5. To prefer to be contented with a little in a station where you have greater opportunities of serving God, than one where you can have more wealth but less godliness.

6. To have wealth, but to spend it upon the poor, and pious objects, even to depriving yourself of necessaries.

7. To prefer to be poor rather than acquire riches by means of injustice, irreligion, or any other wickedness. Such was Tobit, who, when he was dying, left this testimony to his son: “Fear not, my son; we are poor it is true, but we shall have great riches if we fear God.” Of these grades of poverty, the second and seventh are of precept; the first, the fourth, and