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\* Knights of Malta \*

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## Chancellor's Update

### A New Year - A New Beginning

This time of year is famous for New Year's resolutions. Even though quite often such good intentions are forgotten sooner or later, it isn't a bad idea to think about what we ought to be doing or how we can do it better.

More than twenty-five years ago, Fr. Michael Jarecki, O.S.J. gave a splendid retreat to members of the Order of St. John on the Beatitudes, which are signified by the eight points of the Maltese Cross. This would be a good time to review the impact of the Beatitudes upon our lives as interpreted by the Fathers, Doctors and other leaders of the early Church.

1. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* St. John Chrysostom reminds us that God "blesses those who freely humble themselves. He therefore begins at the root of things by uprooting pride, the root and source of all malice. Against it He sets humility, as a strong and stable foundation, which, securely laid, is a base on which other virtues may be built." The saint continues that we should always beg God for His help and even fear and tremble at God's commands. Finally, the saint warns that pride leads to hell, but humility leads to the kingdom of heaven.
2. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth.* St. Ambrose reminds us not to yield to anger, lest we fall into sin. St. Augustine tells us that the meek try to overcome evil with good. St. John Chrysostom states that Our Lord has promised that the mild person shall possess in safety what is his, while the person who is not mild often loses not only his soul, but his paternal inheritance.
3. *Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* According to Bishop Hilary, these mourners are not the bereaved, or those who grieve over an affront, or those upset over their losses. Rather they weep over their sins. St. John Chrysostom says, "They who mourn their own sins shall be comforted when they obtain forgiveness." The saint continues, "And though it suffices for such as these to receive pardon, yet He does not limit His comforting to the forgiveness of their sins, but makes them also partakers of many other consolations, both here and hereafter. For God's rewards are always greater than our labors." Saint Augustine offers another view. "Mourning is sorrow for the loss of those dear to us. Those who have turned to God lose the things they held dear in this world. For they no longer delight in the things they delighted in before. And until the love of eternal things is formed in them, they are stricken by a certain grief. They will therefore be comforted by the Holy Spirit...the Paraclete (Comforter); so that losing temporal delight, they may enjoy that which is eternal."
4. *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall have their fill.* St. Jerome says that it is not sufficient to merely wish for justice. We must hunger and thirst after it; so that by this figure of speech we may understand that we are never sufficiently just, but that we must ever hunger for the works of justice." St. John Chrysostom adds that anyone who hungers after justice desires to live his life in accord with God's justice. Regarding hunger, St. Augustine reminds us of Our Lord's words, My food is to do the will of him who sent me, that I may perfect his work(John iv.34).

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5. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* Remigius describes a merciful man as one who "regards others' afflictions as his own, and grieves for another's misfortune as if it were his own." According to Bishop Hilary, "So greatly is God pleased with our benevolence to all men, that He bestows His mercy only on the merciful."
  6. *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.* "He here calls *clean of heart*," begins St. John Chrysostom, "either those who possess all virtue, and are not conscious of any evil within them, or those who live in that modesty and sobriety that is necessary to see God... Because there are many who show mercy, yet do shameful things, He adds this concerning cleanness of heart." St. Jerome, Biblical scholar, agrees, by adding, "The Immaculate God is seen by the heart that is pure: for the Temple of God cannot be defiled; and this is what is here said: For they shall see God." St. Augustine, reminds us, "Unless a man dies wholly to this life...he shall not be transported to that vision (God)."
  7. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.* St. Jerome tells us that those peacemakers are called blessed "who first make peace within their own heart, and then between their dissident brethren. For what does it profit you to make peace between others, while vice is at war within your own heart?" Echoing this theme, St. Augustine says, "They are peacemakers within themselves, who bringing order to all the impulses of their own spirit, and subjecting them to reason, and having entirely subdued their carnal desires, become a kingdom of God, in which all things are so ordered that that which is chief and supreme in man, rules the other resisting parts which we have in common with the beasts. And so that this which is supreme in man, namely, mind and reason, is subject to what is yet higher, which is Truth Itself the Son of God." St. John Chrysostom concludes, "They who make peace between others are they who not alone bring enemies together in peace, but who also, forgetful of injuries, love peace."
  8. *Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Commenting on this Beatitude, St. John Chrysostom says, "He did not say: Blessed are they who suffer persecution from the Gentiles; that you may not think he alone is blessed who suffers persecution for refusing to worship idols. Therefore, he who suffers persecution from heretics, for refusing to abandon the truth, is also blessed: for he suffers for justice sake. And if one of the mighty of this world, who seems to be a Christian, corrected by you because of his sins, persecutes you; you are blessed in the company of John the Baptist. For if it is true that the Prophets who were slain by their own people were martyrs, then without doubt he who suffers anything for God's sake, even though he suffered it from his own people, shall have the martyr's reward. Because of this Scripture does not attach importance to the persons of the persecutors, but solely to the reason of the persecution: that you may not dwell on who it is that persecutes you, but why." Commenting on the reward, St. Ambrose writes, "The first kingdom of heaven is put before the saints, in deliverance from the body; the second is, after the resurrection to be with Christ. The first kingdom begins; the second perfects."
- As we contemplate these motivations to incorporate into our spiritual lives, we can take heart in the words of Our Lord as He concluded the Beatitudes' portion of His Sermon on the Mount. ***Blessed are you when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for, my sake. Be glad and rejoice, for, your reward is very great in heaven.***

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