



## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: Lesson 4

### THE BEATITUDES continued

Merciful Heavenly Father,

You looked upon a world torn and bleeding from the ravages of sin—a world desperate for deliverance through the grace of a pure and holy God—a world hungry for Your love and Your redemption. In Your great love for us You sent your Son who spread open His arms to embrace Your poor lost children as the Roman soldiers nailed His hands to the Cross. He allowed His Body to be torn open so Your children might receive nourishment for their journey through this life with the promise that Your Son's very flesh and blood would give us what we needed to reach eternal life in the next. Come to Your children, beloved Holy Spirit and guide us in our study of the Law of the New Covenant people of God. We pray in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

### BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Wisdom of God personified in the Old Testament: *“Approach me, you who desire me, and take your fill of my fruits, for memories of me are sweeter than honey, inheriting me is sweeter than the honeycomb. They who eat me will hunger for more; they who drink me will thirst for more.”* Ecclesiasticus 24:21 (29)

(in the Old Testament wisdom was defined as knowledge of God)

St. John's vision of the righteous elect standing before the throne of God: *“Then one of the elders spoke up and said to me, ‘Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?’” I said to him, ‘My lord, you are the one who knows.’ He said to me, ‘These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they stand before God's throne and worship him day and night in his temple. The one who sits on the throne will shelter them. They will not hunger or thirst anymore, nor will the sun nor any heat strike them. For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’”*

Revelation 7:13-17

*“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears turned to their prayers..”*

1 Peter 3:12



Matthew 5:6 *“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.”*

Denying our own “self-sufficient spirit” we yield to God in “poverty of spirit”, acknowledging that we need Him in our lives and in childlike faith we take our place at the foot of His throne. As we draw closer to God we become aware of our sinful nature; we mourn our sins and the sins of the world, and in repentance and atonement we are purified. Our desire is now to surrender our lives and experience spiritual renewal as we strive to submit ourselves to His will, offering our lives as useful tools in the hands of the Master of the universe. As a result of yielding to Him in meekness and humility we want to be more like Him—our souls hunger and thirst for righteousness just as our physical bodies need food and drink for us to survive physically. The fourth Beatitude is a pivotal step in our spiritual journey. In this Beatitude we move from what we need to give to God to the miracle of what God plans to give to us.

**Question:** How did the Old Testament prophets define righteousness? Please read Ezekiel 18:5-9.

**Answer:** As defined by the Old Covenant prophet Ezekiel a righteous man or woman was one who

- Must not worship any god but Yahweh [Ezekiel 18:5-6a: “eat on the mountains” is a reference to partaking of ritual meals at pagan high places of worship to false gods].
- He must practice the virtuous behavior of an obedient and faithful servant by fulfilling the divine will of God as laid down in the Law of the 10 Commandments and the other articles of the Sinai Covenant [Ezekiel 18:5-6, 9]
- He must show kindness and mercy to the disadvantaged Ezekiel 18:7-8].

The Law of the Sinai Covenant contained more than the basic 10 Commandments. The whole body of the Law is found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In the covenant obligations given by God to Moses in Leviticus chapter 19, the Children of Israel are commanded in Leviticus 19:2b to *“Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, **AM** holy.”* This command to holiness is also understood as the path to “righteousness”, being “right” with God, under the Law.

**Question:** In Leviticus 19:18b; and three times in Deuteronomy 6:5; 11:1 & 30:6 the commands of the Covenant are summed up in two commands which Jesus will repeat in the Gospel accounts of His ministry [see Matthew 5:43 and 22:37-40; Mark 12:29; Luke 10:27-29]. What are these two commands that summarize the entire Old Covenant Law and which will also be the sum of the New Covenant Law?

**Answer:** These commands contain the basic principle of the whole Mosaic Law:

1. *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* = Leviticus 19:18b. Jesus will site this command as the second of the two most important commandments of God in Matthew 22:37-40 and in Mark 12:29-31. In the Old Covenant the word “neighbor” was restricted to



those of the covenant. In Luke 10:29-37 Jesus extends its application to embrace all men, friends and brothers as well as enemies.

2. *“Therefore you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.”* = Deuteronomy 6:5; also see Matthew 11:1; 30:6 in which Jesus quotes this command. The call of this command is to love God with an undivided heart; “heart, soul, and strength” equal the whole person. In Matthew 22:37 and Mark 12:29 Jesus cites this command as the *“greatest and the first commandment.”*

The Old Covenant prophets of God defined a righteous covenant believer as one who loves God with his complete self: heart, soul, and strength; who demonstrates that love by keeping God’s commandments, and who extends the love to God in acts of charity to others. In essence, a righteous believer totally submits his/her will to be in complete “rightness” with the will of God. The righteous believer’s desire is to ever increase in the wisdom of God which, according to the writer of Ecclesiasticus, in the Old Covenant, one can never be filled or satisfied [see Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sirach) 24:21 which is quoted in introduction to this section].

Jesus’ definition of “righteousness” is one who “hungers and thirsts” in this beatitude. In St. Jerome’s commentary on the Gospel of Matthew concerning this beatitude, he writes that Jesus is not suggesting we have a legalistic “letter of the law” desire for righteousness but that we should ardently seek righteousness as necessary to our spiritual life as food and water are necessary for our physical life. Jesus has raised the bar in His demand for “rightness” with God—it is not enough to merely submit with a regimented obedience to the Old Covenant Law, as the Pharisees interpreted the path to salvation. In the New Covenant we must actively, diligently, and relentlessly seek righteousness as though our very life depended upon it; for indeed it does.

How did the disciples and Apostles understand this call to righteousness? The answer is found in how “righteousness” is defined by the New Testament writers of Sacred Scripture. In the New Testament the Greek adjective *dikaios* [dik'-ah-yos], usually translated as “righteous” or “just”, and the Greek noun *dikaiosis* [dik-ah-yos-oo-nay'], usually translated as “righteousness” but also translated as “justification” are both defined as the character or quality of being right or just without prejudice [see Strong’s Concordance # 1342 & 1343]. In Old English the word “righteousness” was formally spelled as “rightwiseness”, which is more descriptive in its meaning of “right being with God.” In Romans 3:1-8 St. Paul uses the Greek word for “righteousness” to denote an attribute of God.

Please read Romans 3:1-8.

**Question:** How does Paul use the word “righteousness” in this passage?

**Answer:** The context of St. Paul’s passage shows that *“the righteousness of God”*



[verse 5] is defined as His covenant faithfulness, His truthfulness, and His desire to interact with all men—attributes consistent with His own nature and the covenant promises as expressed throughout Sacred Scripture.

As St Paul continues in Romans chapter 3 he discusses man's universal bondage to sin, in Romans 3:9-20, and then in 3:21-31 he addresses justification [*dikaiosune*] apart from the Old Covenant Law. In verses 21- 30 St. Paul uses the words *dikaios* and *dikaiosune*, translated as "righteousness, "righteous", "justified", "will justify" , and "justification" nine times, but the key verse is Romans 3:25.

**Question:** How many times and in what verses does St. Paul used the words "righteousness", "righteous", "justified", "will justify" or "justification" between Romans 3:21-31, and how does St. Paul define righteousness in Romans 3:25?

**Answer:** He uses this word in verses 21, 22, 24, 25, 26 x 3, 28, & 30. In verse 25 St. Paul addresses God's righteousness as exhibited in the death of Jesus Christ. The connection between Christ's Passion and God's righteousness demonstrates God's holiness which finds expression not only in His covenant faithfulness and truthfulness, but in His condemnation of sin.

Note: repetition of words in Scripture is usually significant. Numbers have significance beyond their numerical value in the Bible. The number nine is usually seen as a number indicating judgment. If you include the use of this Greek word for "righteous" or "just" in verses 4, 5 & 11 St. Paul uses this word in its various forms 12 times. 12 is the number of perfection of government. For more information on the use of numbers in the Bible see the document *The Significance of Numbers in Scripture* in the Charts and Resources section.

This connection is also seen in 2 Peter 1:1-2 St. Peter's greeting to the universal Church is: "*Simon Peter, a slave and Apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of equal value to ours **through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ**, may grace and peace be yours in abundance through knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*"

**Question:** How does St Peter identify "righteousness" in his greeting to the universal Church?

**Answer:** Peter identifies "righteousness" as the righteous action of God with sin and with sinners founded upon the sacrificial death of Jesus the Christ.

This is a key teaching in the New Testament. Righteousness as expressed by the Gospel and Apostolic writers for the most part is expressed as the gracious gift of God to mankind where all who have faith are bathed in the blood of the Lamb of God whereby they are brought into the "rightness" of their relationship with the Most Holy



Trinity. Righteousness for New Covenant believers is then linked to Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross. Righteousness is linked to a state of grace—the grace freely given through the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

**Question:** Is it possible for any man or any woman [other than Mary of Nazareth] to be, in their own human nature, truly righteous without Christ?

**Answer:** No. He was the only “righteous” man ever born of woman—Jesus of Nazareth, Messiah, Son of God, the King of Righteousness. It is through His sacrificial death that we are freed of sin and freed to a “righteous” rebirth into the family of God in which, empowered by the action of God the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments, we strive to continue in a “righteous” relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

## FOR THEY SHALL BE SATISFIED

*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.’ Now He calls those parties, lovers of a true and indestructible good. They will therefore be filled with that food of which the Lord Himself says, ‘My meat is to do the will of my Father,’ which is righteousness; and with that water, of which whosoever ‘drinketh’, as he also says, it ‘shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.’”*

St. Augustine (Augustine), *The Sermon on the Mount*, Book I, chapter II, 6

*“...for they shall be satisfied.”*

This beatitude has a promise that is also a consequence if the blessing is not fulfilled. If we aren't righteous, we won't be “satisfied” or as it is in some translations, we won't be “filled”. Each of the beatitudes, unlike the 10 Commandments, is given in a positive statement and yet a negative is implied if the blessing is not fulfilled. The implications of realizing this implied negative in each beatitude is much more serious when one considers what will be lost if this spiritual perfection is not achieved.

The Greek word which is translated as “satisfied” or “filled” is *chortazo*, [ *khor-tad'-zo*; with the Semitic “tz” diphthong], meaning “to gorge, or to supply food in abundance; feed, fill, satisfy” [see Strong's Concordance #5526].

**Question:** Who is the “righteous One” who satisfies as no one else can satisfy and who fills us as no one else can fill us?

**Answer:** Jesus of Nazareth who fulfilled all the promises made to the Patriarchs. (Acts 4:11-12)

During the Byzantine era of the early Church a pelican wounding its breast to feed its young was a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ in giving us the life-giving blood that



flowed from His side to nourish the Church. This was the kind of self-sacrificial love Christ gave to us and the kind of love He called us to give to each other, “...love one another as I have loved you.” John 15:12b

In his book, *Applause From Heaven*, author Max Lucado tells a moving story that illustrates this kind of self-sacrificial love. On December 7, 1988, 55,000 people were victims of the worst earthquake in the history of Soviet Armenia. Susannah Petroysan and her daughter, 4 year old daughter Gayane, had gone to Susannah’s sister’s house, planning to make Susannah a new dress. Susannah’s sister’s apartment was on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of a 9-story building. When the earthquake struck Susannah just had enough time to gather her daughter in her arms before the floor gave way beneath them and they fell into total darkness. The entire building collapsed, and when Susannah regained consciousness she was in complete darkness. She heard her daughter crying in her arms and reaching above her head she felt a tomb-like concrete panel 18 inches above their bodies. Hours passed without any sign of rescuers coming to their aid. Gayane began to cry incessantly that she was thirsty. As time when by, the little girl’s cries began to grow weaker until her mother realized it was likely that her child would die of dehydration before rescuers could find them. In desperation she felt around in the rubble and miraculously found a jar of Blackberry jam. Hours later the jam was gone and the little girl was still crying. “Mommy I am so thirsty, please Mommy give me something to drink.” But there was no juice, no water, nor any liquids of any kind available to save the life of her child. In desperation she cried out to God to help her save her daughter. It was then that she realized that she did have something she could give her child. She had her own blood. It was all she had so in her love for her child she slashed her fingers with some glass from the jam jar and she gave her daughter her very life’s blood to drink to keep her child alive. Eight days after the earthquake they were rescued. Susannah had saved her child’s life through the gift of her own blood.

**Question:** Why was the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant imperfect? What was the remedy for the imperfection of the Old Covenant? See Psalms 50:5; 51:18; Hebrews 10:4 and CCC # 1963.

**Answer:** Sacrifices under the Old Covenant could only offer temporary solutions for sin—only God could offer the eternal solution. The blood of an animal was not perfect enough to remove the stain of sin from a fallen humanity. God saw mankind fallen into darkness and suffering under the wreckage of a world demolished and entombed by sin. His children were crying out and so He answered their cry by sending His Son to satisfy their cries with the perfect sacrificial gift of His life’s blood.

- In John 4:10-14 Jesus tells the Samaritan woman: “*If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. [...] Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will*



*never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

- In John 7:37 Jesus promises, *“If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink,”*
- In John 6:51 Jesus assures us, *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”*
- And in Matthew 26:28 Jesus *“..took a cup gave thanks and gave it to them saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.’”*

And so, for His children thirsting for salvation God the Son gave them from His perfect sacrifice on the altar of the Cross, His very blood to drink and His very flesh to eat that they might have eternal life. This is the turning point in the Beatitudes. Up to this point the focus has been on the most basic aspects of our relationship with God. Up until now the focus has been **our need**: our need for God, our need for repentance, our need for humility. Now the focus is union with God. The focus turns to Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity and our desire for God Himself coming to us in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, God will give Himself completely to the soul who hungers and thirsts for Him...He will give Himself completely in His body, blood, soul and divinity. He will come to us as the Bridegroom giving all of Himself to His Bride, the Church.

### **BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL**

*“Give to everyone who asks you, for truly this is the way that God loves to give.”*  
St. Clement of Alexandria

*“Be merciful in order that you might receive mercy.”* Bishop St. Polycarp, *Epistle 2.3*

*“Be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful.”* Jesus in Luke 6:36

Matthew 5:7: *“Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.”*

Through the miracle of the Eucharist we are filled with the humanity and divinity of Christ. With Jesus living within us it is our desire to be more like Him. Just as He shared His merciful love with everyone so now we too, in our love for Him, feel the desire to let His mercy flow through us to everyone we meet.

The Greek word used for “merciful” in this passage is the adjective *eleemon* [el-eh-ay'-mone]. In the Old Testament Hebrew being “merciful” meant the outward manifestation of pity, but in the New Covenant this expression of mercy and pity is to be expressed by one who is actively compassionate as God is actively compassionate—a compassion



generated internally but expressed externally as acts of mercy. Although compassion, a feeling of sympathy, is part of mercy [*com* meaning “with”, and *passion* meaning “suffering” so “with suffering”], mercy differs from compassion in that mercy is the active practice of compassion in the readiness to assist those in need. Therefore, the “merciful” are those who are not passive in showing love and compassion but who take an active role in bringing aid to those who suffer. This same Greek word for “mercy” is used to describe Jesus Christ as our High Priest in Hebrews 2:17 and it is used for those who are called to live lives of mercy and compassion “like God” as here in Matthew 5:7 as well as in Luke 6:35-36 which ends with the command “*Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful.*”

**Question:** Was showing mercy and forgiveness to others an integral part of the Old Covenant obligations?

**Answer:** Yes, the command “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” in Leviticus 19:18b demonstrated the call to mercy.

**Question:** As the Israelites interpreted the Law was there any limitation applied to this outpouring of mercy? How did the Israelites interpret the command to love one’s neighbor?

**Answer:** In the Old Covenant the Israelites interpreted the designation “neighbor” as being restricted to those who were members of the Sinai Covenant. Jesus’ teaching contrary to this concept is what led an expert on the Mosaic Law to ask Jesus “*Who is my neighbor*” in Luke 10:29.

**Question:** Give an example of how God demonstrated, through the covenant obligations under the Law of Moses, that the children of Israel were required to show mercy to covenant brothers and sisters?

**Answer:** The obligations of the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year were meant to teach the children of Israel to show the same mercy and forgiveness to each other that God had shown to them during the Exodus experience.

Jesus intensifies, internalizes, and internationalized the Old Covenant command to show mercy and forgiveness. Jesus rejected the notion of the Old Covenant people of God that mercy was only limited to their own people when He taught on the question “who is my neighbor” in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. As you read this parable it is important to understand that to the righteous Jew/Israelite a Samaritan was at best a half-breed heretic. For a covenant believer to come into intimate contact with a Samaritan would leave a covenant believer ritually “unclean” and therefore unable to worship in the Temple unless one was purified. To come in contact with a sinner, or one afflicted with a skin disease, or blood, or a dead body left one ritually impure and essentially cut-off from the community until one would be purified





through holy water under the purification rites of the Sinai Covenant [see Numbers 5:1-4; 19:1-22].

**Background on the Samaritans:** In 722BC the Assyrian army had conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel [2 Kings 17:1-6]. As was their custom the Assyrians exiled the entire population of Israelites, except for a very few left behind to serve the Assyrian masters [17:23]. In place of the exiled 10 tribes of Israel the Assyrians imported 5 eastern tribes to work the land [17:24]. Each tribe brought with them the worship of their 5 principle gods but they also adopted the worship of the local God, Yahweh [17:25-41]. These foreign people, who came to be called Samaritans [after the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Samaria], did not worship Yahweh as directed under the Sinai Covenant, instead they interpreted the worship of Yahweh for themselves choose their own priests, and setting up their own temple on Mt. Gerizim. The chronicler of 2 Kings concludes *“Thus these nations venerated the LORD, but also served their idols. And their sons and grandsons, to this day, are doing as their fathers did.”* The Samaritans came to accept the first five books of the Bible as inspired Scripture, the Torah of Moses, but rejected the rest of the Old Testament canon. There was great enmity between Jews/ Israelites and Samaritans—so much enmity in fact that the Old Covenant people avoided passing through Samaria because they were likely to be robbed or killed.

**Question:** Did Jesus consider the Samaritans to be a people of God’s Holy Covenant? See Jesus reply to the Samaritan woman in John 4: 20-24. What does He tell her concerning her people and the future of the Covenant?

**Answer:** John 4:22 *“You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews.”* Jesus dismisses the religion of the Samaritans as being outside the covenant and a perversion through their lack of understanding. However, He continues with the promise that one day the Covenant of God will be extended beyond Israel. At that time the Spirit, given by God that reveals truth and enables one to worship God with a full understanding of His Covenant, would teach everyone to worship in “Spirit and truth”.

Please read the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:29-37

**Question:** Why would the example of the Samaritan’s mercy to a Jew have been shocking to the Jewish and Israelite crowd?

**Answer:** Jesus used a heretic to set the standard for forgiveness and compassion indicating that the standard for a Covenant believer should be even higher! Both the Levite, a teacher of the Law, and the priest failed to show compassion either because they were afraid of robbers or perhaps their failure to show mercy was a result of their concern that the ritual impurity from contact with a bleeding body, dead or alive would contaminate them. In either case, their selfish concerns or their rigid adherence to the



“letter of the law” became a hindrance to their obligation to the “spirit of the law” in the covenant command to show mercy.

**Question:** What is Jesus’ teaching on mercy and forgiveness in this parable? To whom does God’s command to show love and mercy extend—who is the New Covenant believer’s neighbor? Please read Luke 6:35-36 to help you with your answer.

**Answer:** In Luke 6:35-36 as in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus extends the application of mercy and love to embrace all men, friends and brothers as well as enemies. Love and mercy must not be limited to external acts of charity but love and mercy must come from the heart of the New Covenant believer. In Luke 6:35-36 Jesus teaches, *“But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful.”* Everyone in God’s creation is the New Covenant believer’s neighbor and is deserving of love, mercy and compassion, and one’s merciful response to someone in need is not determined by one’s own convenience or inconvenience. See CCC #581; 1829; 2447.

**Question:** Is this parable and Jesus’ teaching in Luke 6:35-36 an answer to Cain’s question to God in Genesis 4:9? What did Cain ask and what is the answer to his question?

**Answer:** Cain asked God, *“Am I my brother’s keeper?”* The answer is “YES”!

### **FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY**

*Love itself is the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: we run toward it, and once we reach it. In it we shall find rest.”* St. Augustine [Augustine], *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, 10.4

Writing of Jesus’ humanity: *“...therefore, he had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God to expiate the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.”* Hebrews 2:17-18

*“So speak and so act as people who will be judged by the law of freedom. For the judgment is merciless to one who has not shown mercy; **mercy triumphs over judgment.**”* James 2:12-13



**Question:** What is the 5<sup>th</sup> petition of the “Our Father” prayer?

**Answer:** *“And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”*

**Question:** What is it that is implied in the second phrase of this petition that will not be granted if we fail to forgive our trespasses?

**Answer:** Our petition for forgiveness will not be heard unless we first forgive others who have wronged us. It is interesting that this is the 5<sup>th</sup> petition. In the significance of numbers in Scripture, 5 is the number signifying grace.

This petition is so important that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus will return to address this particular petition on granting mercy and forgiveness after finishing the *Our Father* prayer in Matthew 6: 14-15, and Jesus will continue teaching the importance of extending God’s mercy to us in our relationships with others throughout His ministry. An example of Jesus’ commitment to mercy as a necessary Christian virtue can be found in the parable of the Ungrateful Servant, also know as the Parable of the Merciless Servant.

Please read Matthew 18:23-35: The Parable of the Ungrateful or Merciless Servant

**Question:** What was the Ungrateful Servant’s sin and what was the broader implication of this sin in his relationship with his master/ God?

**Answer:** He failed to show the same mercy to a fellow servant who owed him a very little compared to the mercy shown to him by his master to whom he owed a great deal.

**Question:** How does Jesus end this teaching on mercy and forgiveness? What is His warning?

**Answer:** The merciless servant is cast into “prison” and Jesus warns *“So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”*

Don’t misunderstand this parable; God’s forgiveness is unconditional. Jesus paid the price for our sins on the Cross once and for all, but the sin of our unforgiveness to others can separate us from God’s forgiveness. God in His mercy has forgiven us so much more than we could ever repay. Our sin in refusing to forgive our brother or sister in the family of Adam can become an impediment to the mercy and forgiveness God has made possible to us through the sacrifice of His Son. Our refusal to forgive blocks our reception of His mercy and forgiveness. God’s forgiveness doesn’t enter us unless through Christ we become channels of mercy and forgiveness. St Paul, who knew first hand the dept of God’s forgiveness, wrote in Ephesians 4:32, *“And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.”* Even when it is hard to forgive for our own sake we are still called to the unity of forgiveness that is in Jesus Christ for His love and forgiveness is “the love that loves to



the end”, John 13:1 “...*Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end.*”

**Question:** How far are we required to go in our mercy and forgiveness? Must we forgive our greatest enemy?

**Answer:** When we forgive those who have hurt us deeply we cooperate in God’s grace. Forgiving others allows us to see how Christ could forgive those who lied at His trial and nailed Him to the Cross—which includes all of us for we are all culpable in His death through our own sin. When we are filled with Christ’s righteousness we look upon the face of our enemy and see the face of the Christ who loved and forgave. Love is stronger than sin. The sin of unforgiveness binds and wounds the soul so much more deeply than the barbs of your enemy. Forgive your enemy, set your soul free and feel the power of God’s grace working in you! See CCC # 2844

*“Because you are God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you.” Colossians 3:12-13*

### **Questions for group discussion:**

**Question:** The amount of money we have isn’t as important as the way we use it. What is your attitude toward your money and material possessions?

**Question:** Why does Christ give Himself to us, body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Most Holy Eucharist?

**Answer:** The Eucharist fulfills Jesus’ promise to be with us *“always, until the end of the age”* [Matthew 28:20]. Being united to the humanity of Jesus in the Eucharist we are at the same time united to His divinity. He gives Himself to us in this way as spiritual nourishment for our journey through this life to Heaven just as God gave the manna and the life-giving water to the Children of Israel in their desert wandering on the way to the Promised Land –He gives to us because of His great love for us. God’s whole plan for the salvation of mankind is directed toward our participation in the life of the Most Holy Trinity—the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Question:** When does this sharing in the life of the Trinity began and how does it progress through our faith journey?

**Answer:** It begins with the Sacrament of Baptism when by the power of God the Holy Spirit we are jointed to Christ in rebirth, no long sons and daughters of Adam but adopted sons and daughters of God the Father. This supernatural life is strengthened



and increased in the Sacrament of Confirmation and is nourished and deepened through our joining with Christ in the Eucharist where through eating and drinking the glorified Body and Blood of Christ we become united to the person of Jesus through His humanity and His divinity: *“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him”*[John 6:56]. The result is that we are drawn up into the eternal relationship of love in the Trinity of the Most Holy God with the promise that, at the end of our journey, if we persevere in faith and obedience, we will enter the eternal kingdom of our Father.

**Question:** How often are we to receive Christ in the Eucharist; the minimum and the recommended; what are the restrictions against receiving? See CCC # 2042; 1343;

**Question:** Is the Eucharist necessary for our salvation? Read John 6:41-58 [verse 57 is the key] and CCC #1324-27; 1341-44; 1389-1396; 2180.

**Question:** What are the corporal works of mercy outlined in the New Testament and in the Catechism? How do you fulfill these works of compassion? See Matthew 6:2-4; 25:31-46; James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17; and the CCC #2447.