

## Further discussion & application of the Beatitudes as a Staircase to Conversion:

Like a road map:

- We can trace the route / steps, but may not see the dips, hills, and valleys.
- TS Elliot in his intro to his poem, *The Four Quartets* wrote
  - “The way up and the way down are one and the same.”
  - The way to heaven is both up and down: the way up is also through sacrifice.
- The nine steps, therefore, can be seen as three stages:
  - The first three Beatitudes involve going downward; emptying of self;
  - The second three Beatitudes are the turning points, the “landing”;
  - The last three Beatitudes are the way up, ascending, yet each requiring sacrifice.
- Since each of us is different, we each have different weak areas, barriers to conversion.
- These three stages correspond to the three Ways of the Spiritual Life.

In a practical way, these are the essential steps to Reconciliation, with God or with others He has called us to love:

- When we experience a broken relationship, these provide a step by step path to move towards reconciliation:

*The way down:*

- 1st. Recognize that everything you have is a gift of God (gratitude);*
- 2nd. Recognize guilt for sins & misuse of God's gifts (remorse);*
- 3rd. Recognize pride that exacerbates the relationship (humility);*

*The Turn upward:*

- 4th. Desire to do what is right in the eyes of God: Love*
- 5th. Desire to turn the other cheek; to relinquish the “right to justice”;*
- 6th. Desire purity of soul, grace to stand without blemish before God!*

*The Way up:*

- 7th. Take action to restore Peace, in imitation of God.*
- 8th. Accept whatever rejection may come for your actions,*
- 9th. ... and accept without retaliation ridicule for your faith in Christ.*

- This may seem idealistic, even insurmountable, but like conversion, it is a process.
  - Reconciliation begins with ourselves
    - by setting our hearts & minds in the direction of reconciliation,
    - it then shapes our prayer,
    - until it sets our convictions and our wills,
    - until we step out and make peace with family, friends, and neighbors.

This also provides a perfect model for meditative prayer, especially in preparation for the celebration of Mass or the Liturgy of the Hours:

- Use the first 3 Beatitudes (the Way Down) for Recollection.
- Use the next 3 to set your heart in God's direction, to “Lift up your hearts!”
- Then proceed with Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, Lectoria Devina, etc.
- Finally, use the last 3 Beatitudes (the Way Up) for intercessory prayer and for setting your heart for reentering the world in the name of Christ.

What about those “rewards”?

- Not “salvation” per se: these steps are not a method or process for earning or working our way to heaven (1 Cor 3);
- Rather, this path is what it means to believe / to have faith; grace enables us to obey.

- As Father Nicholas Grou wrote many years ago in his “Marks of a True Disciple,” our focus must not be on whether, as a result of our efforts even our faith, we will be saved, for in essence this is a self-centered quest; rather our focus is to be, first, on giving glory to God; second, on growing by grace in holiness (the stages); and then, thirdly, trusting in hope our eternal destiny to the mercy of our Heavenly Father.
- So what about those rewards Jesus promised?
  - We are blessed! Our focus on Him and following Him in faithful obedience by grace reaps the blessings of his grace: “from his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace” (John 1:16).