

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

I thought I knew what it meant to be poor when I was in middle school. My dad had disappeared and my mom's bad heart forced her to quit working. Then Mom spotted an article in one of her Catholic magazines about a famine in Ethiopia. We saw pictures of dying, malnourished babies, their stomachs swollen, flies crawling across their cracked lips. "No matter how bad things seem," Mom said, "it's always worse for someone else."

I'm telling you this, not so you'll feel guilty about all you have, but because Jesus challenges us to *use our own experiences—good and bad—for the benefit of others*. My mom and I didn't know where our next meal was coming from, but seeing those children who'd never had a full meal in their lives made us realize we had to help. *Blessed are the poor, who bring us out of our misery.*

Poverty isn't always monetary. Maybe you have every material thing you need, but you lack one true friend. That's a poverty of friendship. Maybe you have a sibling who achieves everything, but for you it hasn't happened. Your poverty may be a sense that you don't measure up to someone's expectations. Whatever your personal poverty is, Jesus can help you transform it into something good. But don't wait. Do it today. His kingdom is waiting for you.

What is my “personal poverty”? Something I’m lacking?
I need to think about this and write it down here.

Do I know of anyone else who has experienced this same kind of poverty? What did they do about it, and how was it good or bad for themselves and others around them?

God, I am poor in _____. Help me find a way to use my poverty to help others. Help me to never forget how this feels. Give me compassion and mercy for others. Thanks.

BEATI-“TO DO” LIST

- Pledge:** I will acknowledge my own poverty and have compassion when I see it in others.
- Pledge:** I will use my poverty to help at least one other person who is suffering. Here’s how I’ll do it:

ANOTHER LOOK...

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“**P**oor in spirit.” That seems confusing. Wouldn’t Jesus want us to be “rich” in our spirituality? What’s he talking about here?

Remember the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector in the temple? The Pharisee stands before God, loudly thanking him that he’s not a jerk, “like the rest of humanity.” *Ouch*. The tax collector stays in back, quietly beating his breast and pleading, “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

The Pharisee has a rich resume of “spiritual” qualifications. “I fast twice a week,” he brags. “And I pay tithes on my whole income.” He has the mistaken idea that his holiness gives him some kind of exclusive, all-access, backstage pass to God. But by elevating himself above others, he’s distanced himself from God. He may be rich in spirit, but he’s poor in humanity.

The tax collector has probably come by his “riches” dishonestly. He knows and admits it. Like the criminal on the cross with Jesus, the tax collector realizes the game is over. He has nothing to show God and realizes his complete dependence on God. That’s poverty of spirit. *Blessed are those who know when they’ve blown it. God loves them and helps them find their way.*

Does that mean we can do whatever we want, as long as we apologize? I’m pretty sure you know the answer, but read on and decide for yourself.

Have there been times when I am overly proud of my achievements?

When I see other people do this, how does that make me feel about them?

How has God helped me in my life?

Lord God, I am nothing without you. But with you, all things are possible. Help me remember to depend on you, morning, noon, and night.

BEATI-“TO DO” LIST

Write down three ways God works through you (your talents or gifts):

Ask yourself: Do I see God's work here or only my own?

STILL ANOTHER LOOK...

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

So far, we've talked about personal poverty, and poverty of spirit. But there's another one that's so painfully obvious you were probably wondering when we'd get to it.

Real poverty. It's estimated that 22,000 children die of poverty every day. Approximately 870 million people in the world are currently not getting enough food to be healthy. (UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME, WWW.WFP.ORG)

**BLESSED ARE THE POOR, THE FORGOTTEN, THE LONELY,
AND THE NEGLECTED. THEY ARE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.**

So ask yourself again, is it okay to do whatever we want as long as we say we're sorry? We make our own choices, just as Jesus makes his. Pope Francis says, "When the Son of God became man, he chose the path of poverty and self-emptying...Here we see God's choice to be poor: he was rich and yet he became poor in order to enrich us through his poverty." (MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER, FEBRUARY 2014)

The choice is yours. Do you embrace poverty as Jesus does, or do you ignore it? Do you live a life detached from others, or do you become involved? Which path will lead to happiness?

What is one thing I could never give up, no matter what?
(I really need to think about this.)

Is there something I am overly attached to? Is it a thing like my phone or car? An action like shopping, eating, or dieting? A need to be liked? Is it a person? A habit? I will name it here:

Lord God, the world wants me to spend money and buy new stuff all the time. Help me find a better way. Help me realize that "things" don't matter nearly as much as people.

BEATI-"TO DO" LIST

Visualize yourself becoming free of whatever you named above that you're overly attached to. Write down some ways you can do this.

Learn about world hunger and poverty at www.crs.org.