

Christian Moral Life: The Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were asked to read Chapter 9: Christian Moral Life: The Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments (pages 214–241) in preparation for this session.
- Students were requested to complete the third “Applying What You Have Learned” activity on page 213 and to be ready to share their findings.

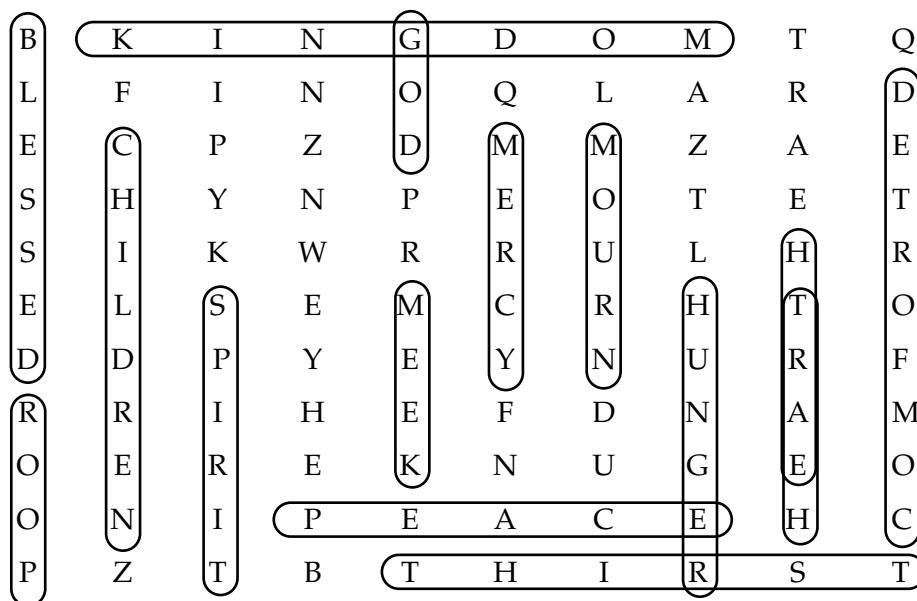
Warm-up (10–15 minutes)

- Begin the session by having the students share their analyses of TV and radio advertisements aimed at teens (from the third “Applying What You Have Learned” activity on page 213). Encourage the teens to evaluate the sort of messages these media are selling about/to teens and whether they enhance human worth and dignity.
- Go on to ask the students to spend a few minutes counting their blessings. Have the students think of the many ways they have been blessed and then write them on a sheet of paper. If you wish, list the following ideas on the board to help the students along.
 - Count your blessings resulting from: a personal talent; being a member of your family; living where you do; being baptized in the Catholic faith; the troubles you’ve gone through; the friendships you have; the activities in which you’re involved; your pets.
- When the teens finish writing, make sure they all have a solid list of blessings. Help those students who don’t see themselves as blessed by pointing out blessings you know they possess. Conclude by helping the teens appreciate just how well-blessed they truly are.

Part I: Lesson (25–30 minutes)

Text Reference: *Unsung Heroes: Called to Happiness* (pages 214–218)

- Introduce the Beatitudes by distributing copies of the activity sheet “Count Your Blessings” from the lesson. Have the students complete it on their own or with a partner. Correct answers appear below:
 - The hidden words are: blessed, poor, spirit, mourn, comforted, meek, earth, heart, thirst, mercy, God, peace, children, kingdom.



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

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- After checking responses, go on to explain to the teens that the Beatitudes confound us. We wonder how the poor, the sorrowing, the down and out, or the persecuted can be blessed. The Beatitudes reverse what we consider important. Jesus insists that in the world of God's blessings the marginalized have the center stage, the meek inherit, and peacemakers are God's children, not traitors to the state. The Beatitudes describe a world in which showing mercy, seeking God, taking insults, hungering for justice, and grieving for loved ones brings blessings among us. The Beatitudes possess a holistic perspective. They offer a vision of wholeness that leaves no one out.
- To help the teens better appreciate the Beatitudes, read them out loud—one at a time—and ask the teens the following questions:
 - Begin by pointing out that the “poor in spirit” are people who know they need God. They realize that they cannot save themselves, that life and grace are gifts. Then, ask: If you feel that you need God, do you let God know? Why or why not?
 - Read the second Beatitude. Ask: Who has helped you deal with sorrow or suffering? How? Whom have you helped?
 - Read the third Beatitude. Explain that the meek are not the wimpy. Rather, they are people who recognize that they cannot really possess people or creation. The meek recognize that all is gift, and so they are humble and helpful. Ask: Of all the things you *have*, what do you really *need*? What are you willing to “let go of” to be able to help other people?
 - Read the fourth Beatitude. Explain that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are people whose greatest desire is to do what God asks of them. These are folk who crave goodness, whose eyes are on the prize. Ask: What is the most important thing in your life? What would you do to get it?
 - Read the fifth Beatitude. Ask: What people are calling you to be merciful for them? Can you show mercy by standing up for a nerd who is being picked on or by talking to kids who are outside the “in crowd”? What is one way you can act with mercy by taking a step in the “foot of charity”?
 - Read the sixth Beatitude. Explain to the students that the clean of heart are people who see beyond “surface” things. They really focus on others to get to the heart of the matter. Ask: Who do you know who sees that there is more to you than meets the eye?
 - Read the seventh Beatitude. Point out that the term “peacemaker” appears here and nowhere else in the entire Bible. Jesus wants us to know that those who make peace are mending the tears in the social fabric. They do God's work. Then ask: What do you think the peacemaker Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., meant when he said, “There is no way to peace. Peace is the way”? How can you be a peacemaker in your family? Your school? Among your friends?
 - Read the final Beatitude. Remind the teens that Jesus not only preached the Beatitudes, he lived them, and that cost him. Down through the ages, it has also cost his followers. It continues to cost those trying to live Christian lives today. Write the following quote from G. K. Chesterton on the board: “**Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. Christianity has been found difficult and not tried.**” Then, ask the teens: If you were accused, brought to court, and tried for being a Christian, would you be convicted? Would you be *willing* to be convicted?
- Divide the class into eight small groups. Assign one Beatitude to each group. Have the groups list ways in which they see their peers honoring the Beatitude, that is, mourning, being merciful, acting as peacemakers, etc. Then ask the teens to list ways their peers are *not* honoring the Beatitude: ways they ignore what should cause them to mourn, refuse mercy, choose violence over peace, etc. (*Note:* If necessary, remind the class that they are to list general ways of behaving, not the actions of specific individuals.)

- Ask each group to choose a spokesperson to share lists with the class. While the groups are sharing, invite dialogue about the issues that are raised.

Finally, ask for the teens' responses to the first two "Discussion Questions" on page 218.

Break/Art Exercise (20–25 minutes)

- Join the students in a break with refreshments.
- Have newspapers, magazines, and art materials available. Direct the students to remain in their small groups and to use headlines, photos, and articles from the newspapers and magazines to create a collage illustrating the Beatitude they were assigned earlier. As the students work, consider playing a recording of a Beatitudes song such as "Blest Are They" by David Haas or "Beatitudes" by the Dameans.
- When the groups finish their collages, allow them to present their work to the class. Be sure to post the completed collages around the meeting space.

Part 2: Lesson (30–40 minutes)

Text Reference: Love God: The First Three Commandments; Love Your Neighbor: The Fourth through Tenth Commandments (pages 218–240)

- Introduce the Ten Commandments by writing the following Scripture references on the board: **Exodus 20:1–17** and **Deuteronomy 5:6–21**. Have strong readers read each reference aloud. Remind the students that until God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, the Hebrews were a pretty motley group. It is the Ten Commandments (the Sinai covenant) that make the Hebrews a people with common values. In the Sinai covenant God agrees to be Israel's God, and the people agree to keep the Ten Commandments. These rules transform a mob of individuals into a *holy community*. The Commandments help the people—and us—know God's will, and they lay out guidelines for us to follow as we strive to remain faithful to God.
- Now that the teens have heard the commandments proclaimed from the Scriptures, have them close their Bibles and textbooks and see if they can recall all ten by heart. List them on the board. If the teens don't know the Ten Commandments by heart, encourage them to memorize them.
- Take time to stress once again that the Hebrew people did not see the Commandments as restraints. Rather, they experienced them as release—release from floundering in faith to following in faith. Call on different students to read the passages aloud from their Bibles: Psalm 19:8–11; Psalm 119:17–20; and Psalm 119:97–100. Emphasize how the psalmist *rejoices* in the Law of God.
- Point out that the Commandments are all imperatives: "Do this! Don't do that!" Explain that the Commandments take this form because the authors of the Bible knew that imperatives are easier to pass on and to remember than are declaratives. For example, it's easier for a parent to warn a child—and a child to remember—"Hot! Don't touch the stove!" than it is to explain and, certainly, remember the properties of combustion and their effect on human skin. Go on to tell the teens that although most of the Commandments are negative imperatives, they all can be "translated" into positive statements that help us live faithful lives.
- Distribute copies of the activity sheet "The Ten Commandments—Guidelines for Faithful Living." Make sure you have copies of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* available for the students to use as references. Read aloud the directions on the top of the sheet. Point out that the *Catechism* gives us declaratives for the Commandments' imperatives. Then, depending on the number of *Catechism* copies available, have the students work on their own, in pairs, or in small groups to complete the activity sheet.
- When the students finish writing, check responses. The best answers to the matching exercise on the activity sheet are: I = C; II = G; III = F; IV = J; V = K; VI = H; VII = B; VIII = E; IX = A; X = D. The thrust here, however, is to expand the activity and to deal with the Commandments individually, as you did with the Beatitudes above. As you check responses, draw on the following material to investigate each Commandment:
- *I = C: Put first things first. Feed your faith with the Scriptures, prayer, and worship (#2134–36).*
 - Ask: What are some "other gods" teens feel tempted to put before God today?
 - Help the students recognize that God must be first in our lives. We must not allow celebrity, money, pleasure, or even knowledge to take God's place and become a false god.
- *II = G: Cherish God's name and all the people and things that bear it (#2161–62, 2165).* Tell the teens that faith in God should make a difference in how we speak, act, and live.

- Take a moment to review the material on pages 222–223 to make sure the students understand why false oaths, blasphemy, perjury, cursing, and any use of God’s name when we do not really intend to address or speak accurately about God violate the second commandment.
- *III = F: Make sure others have regular opportunities to rest and offer God their thanks and praise (#2194).* Remind the teens that God favored us first. Our worship simply returns the favor.
 - Have the teens write on a piece of paper everything they can remember doing on the previous Sunday. Direct them to note the activities on their list that they do nearly every Sunday, that they rarely do except on Sunday, and that they think help to refresh them and prepare them for the coming week. Discuss the results, noting all those things that mark Sunday as a special kind of day.
- *IV = J: Love, respect, and care for the family (#2202, 2207, 2212).* This command reminds us that, made in the image of the God of relationship, we are a people related to one another.
 - Ask: In what specific ways do you honor and respect your parents? Your teachers? The clergy? Do they show respect for you? If so, in what ways?
- *V = K: Work for justice. Be a peacemaker. Support and protect human rights (#2306, 2317).* Emphasize to the teens that all life comes from God, thus all life—from top to bottom, start to finish—is sacred. We must honor life and what makes for life: justice and peace.
 - Ask: What groups are working to support life?
 - Go on to review the text section “V. You Shall Not Kill” (pages 227–230) by encouraging the students to ask questions to clarify Church teachings on the various life issues.
 - Finally, give the students copies of the activity sheet “Moral Dilemmas Related to Life Issues” (page 312 in the TWE). Read the dilemmas as a class. Then, ask the students to show their response to the dilemma physically by moving somewhere along a continuum from “Absolutely Okay” to “Absolutely Wrong” that you have stretched across the room. This allows you to move up and down the line to interview different students about their responses to each dilemma.
- *VI = H: Treat your own and others’ sexuality as a gift, nothing to abuse or make fun of (#2333); IX = A: Be modest and pure (#2518, 2521–24).* We are sexual beings, who relate to God and others as women or men who are loving and loveable. Our sexual behavior expresses how we live. These commands tell us that sexual intercourse is permitted only between husband and wife, and that chastity is a virtue for us all.
 - Ask: How does the portrayal of sexuality in the media help or hinder efforts to abide by these two commandments?
- *VII = B: Recognize and respond to the needs of the poor and vulnerable (#244–47); X = D: Be happy about others’ good fortune, not jealous (#2538–40).* Ask: What is your most treasured possession? Why? How important is it to you that others respect your possessions?
 - Explain that the seventh and tenth Commandments call us to live lives marked by justice and mercy, to respect what belongs to others, and to share what we have with those in need. They demand that we act with justice and have compassion for the poor.
 - Write the word “**Justice**” on the board and beneath it in three columns the words “**Commutative, Legal, and Distributive.**” Ask the students to describe each type (see page 235).
- *VIII = E: Refuse to believe everything you hear on the radio or TV, but seek the truth. It’s out there (#2512).* Remind the teens that bearing false witness means more than lying. It means destroying someone’s reputation; jumping to conclusions about others; talking about others’ faults, even if they are true; boasting or bragging; and flattery, if we use it to manipulate people. Jesus said, “I am the truth” (John 14:6). Lying, cheating, self-seeking, gossiping all dishonor the truth, and, therefore, dishonor the Son of God.
 - Ask: Why is gossiping so damaging to others? What’s wrong with bragging about yourself? Bragging about others?

Prayer Experience (10 minutes)

- Have the students gather around the Paschal (Easter) Candle. Light the candle. Observe a few moments of silence.
- Lead the students in the St. Richard of Chichester’s prayer “Day by Day” on page 241. If you are able, also play a recording of the song “Day by Day” from the soundtrack of *Godspell*.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Encourage the students to learn the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes by heart.

Have the students read Chapter 10: Prayer (pages 242–256) in preparation for their next session.

Tell the students to come prepared to share their favorite prayer with class and to write out their responses to the “Discussion Questions” on page 246 of Chapter 10.

☀ Count Your Blessings



When you listed your blessings at the beginning of this session, you probably didn't list poverty, sorrow, lowliness, hunger, or persecution, did you? Probably not. But Jesus did. Jesus called all of them "blessings"—*Beatitudes*. Refresh your memory of the Beatitudes. Look for the hidden words in the puzzle—13 in all. Circle the words then use them to fill in the blanks. You may use a word more than once. Need help? Read Matthew 5:1–12. Count yourself blessed!

B	K	I	N	G	D	O	M	T	Q
L	F	I	N	O	Q	L	A	R	D
E	C	P	Z	D	M	M	Z	A	E
S	H	Y	N	P	E	O	T	E	T
S	I	K	W	R	R	U	L	H	R
E	L	S	E	M	C	R	H	T	O
D	D	P	Y	E	Y	N	U	R	F
R	R	I	H	E	F	D	N	A	M
O	E	R	E	K	N	U	G	E	O
O	N	I	P	E	A	C	E	H	C
P	Z	T	B	T	H	I	R	S	T

- * _____ are the _____ in _____, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- * _____ are they who _____, for they will be _____.
- * _____ are the _____, for they shall inherit the _____.
- * _____ are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- * _____ are the merciful, for they will be shown _____.
- * _____ are the clean of _____, for they will see _____.
- * _____ are the _____ makers, for they will be called _____ of God.
- * _____ are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the _____ of heaven.

The Ten Commandments— Guidelines for Faithful Living



The Ten Commandments are not simply a list of dos and don'ts. They are God-given guidelines for faithful living. That is why the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* suggests ways to live out the Commandments. Match each Commandment to its way of living. The numbers refer to sections in the *Catechism*. Refer to these sections if you need help.

Ten Commandments

- I. I, the Lord, am your God. You shall not have other gods besides me. ____
- II. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain. ____
- III. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day. ____
- IV. Honor your father and your mother. ____
- V. You shall not kill. ____
- VI. You shall not commit adultery. ____
- VII. You shall not steal. ____
- VIII. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ____
- IX. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. ____
- X. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor. ____

Faithful Living

- A. Be modest and pure (#2518, 2521–24).
- B. Recognize and respond to the needs of the poor and vulnerable (#244–47).
- C. Put first things first. Feed your faith with the Scriptures, prayer, and worship (#2134–36).
- D. Be happy about others' good fortune, not jealous (#2538–40).
- E. Refuse to believe everything you hear on the radio or TV, but seek the truth. It's out there (#2512).
- F. Make sure others have regular opportunities to rest and offer God their thanks and praise (#2194).
- G. Cherish God's name and all the people and things that bear it (#2161–62, 2165).
- H. Treat your own and others' sexuality as a gift, nothing to abuse or make fun of (#2333).
- J. Love, respect, and care for the family (#2202, 2207, 2212).
- K. Work for justice. Be a peacemaker. Support and protect human rights (#2306, 2317).