

Kathy Horan



WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?





Author bio

Kathy Horan

Kathy Horan has worked extensively in a range of teaching and leadership roles within Catholic Education in South Australia as a principal, deputy principal, RE consultant, teacher and REC, and member of parish sacrament teams. Her major focus and area of leadership for the past 50 years has been the faith formation of students, staff and families – particularly in the area of supporting families through the sacrament preparation and celebration programme. *What Would Jesus Do?* has enabled Kathy to continue the teaching and learning processes as she continues to find ways of bringing the Jesus of the gospels to all.

Kathy holds the following degrees:

- Diploma in Teaching
- Graduate Diploma in Religious Education
- Certificate in Pastoral Liturgy
- Master of Theology and Master of Education

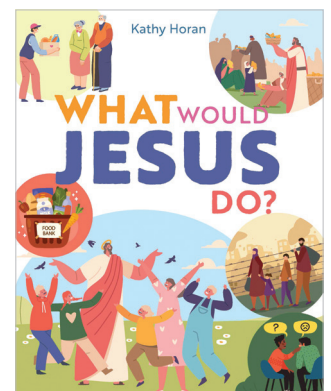
General Introduction and message from the author

Each chapter in this book relates to one of the Beatitudes that Jesus gave to the people when he spoke to the crowd from the mountains. This is known as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

By looking at each Beatitude, we discover what Jesus was like. The Beatitudes teach us how to treat other people and how to act. *What Would Jesus Do?* challenges us to think about how to follow Jesus' example and make our relationships with one another the most important thing.

Before we ask, 'What would Jesus do?', let's think about what we can do to make this world a better place.

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by Kathy Horan



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INTRODUCTION

Teacher Information

Matthew's gospel presents Jesus as the teacher who provides a framework for his followers to live by. This framework, known as the Beatitudes, is a clear code of conduct for all those who wish to be disciples, or followers of Jesus.

Jesus spells out the values and ways of behaviour that are needed for his followers, then and now. Jesus shows them what he means by the way he interacts with all kinds of people, especially those on the margins and excluded from everyday interactions with people. For those who listen, observe and then do what Jesus did, God's blessings will be present.

By looking at each Beatitude, we get a glimpse of what was important to Jesus and concrete examples of how to treat ourselves and others. The question 'What would Jesus do?' is valid and important for all of us.

Activities for Students

Jesus is known as a 'people person'. When we think about people described this way we might ask ourselves these questions.

Discuss and write a response:

- What is it that makes a person stand out?
- Are they outgoing people who find it easy to relate to others and who can bring others into a group?
- Are they people who tune in to what is happening around them and can share their insights with others?
- Do they get involved in worthy activities that support those with fewer opportunities and greater needs?
- Are they genuinely interesting and interested in getting to know people?

In the Beatitudes, Jesus is able to reach out to many different kinds of people. We can follow his example in accepting differences and reaching out to those in need. It can be difficult for us to imagine, at times, why life can be more challenging for some people.

Imagine yourself in other people's shoes. Respond to these questions:

- What would it feel like to have little or no food for days on end?
- How would I feel if I felt friendless and was not able to take part in a school outing/experience because of lack of money?
- What about how a child at school would feel if they could not afford the correct uniform?
- What would Jesus be thinking about these situations, and what would he do?



Teacher Information

Beatitude means God's blessing; this blessing is for those who live their lives with a poverty of spirit that means they are detached from worldly things; they act with mercy towards others; they make peace and heal divisions and hurts. The emphasis on blessedness is not on what makes us happy but on a deep awareness that it is God who blesses all those who live by the values outlined in the Beatitudes.

In Matthew's gospel, in the sermon on the mount, Jesus is portrayed as the new law-giver. When he uses this location, Matthew places Jesus on the mountain, a sign or symbol of a place of encounter with God. The Hebrew Scriptures tell us that Moses went up the mountain, a place of encounter with God. When he came down from the mountain, he presented the ten commandments to the people.

Jesus shows that the Beatitudes provide us with a framework for living according to the law of love, shared by Jesus in his ministry. The Beatitudes are like a code of behaviour. They spell out the values of Jesus.

Activities for Students

Brainstorm and create a collage or discussion on the topic of codes of behaviour and include these ideas:

- What is a code of behaviour? Think/chat about some examples of behaviour expected of people in different groups.
- Think of a team or sport club.
 - How does a person get accepted into a team or club?
 - What are the expectations of members?
 - How are they expected to behave?



Teacher Information

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

This first Beatitude sets the scene for what follows. At first glance it looks as though things have been up-ended. For example, people are named as blessed or fortunate if they are poor in spirit – and that is true!

Poverty in itself and its many forms, is not a good thing. We all have real needs – physical, emotional, social, material, such as food, drink and shelter that need to be met in some way to enable us to have a good life. In this Beatitude, Jesus challenges his followers, making it clear that attachment to money, power, earthly goods will not lead us to experience God’s blessing in our daily lives. We need to use and share our resources, rather than hold on to them for our exclusive use.

Teachers

- Invite a local parishioner or volunteer at St Vincent de Paul to come along to talk to the students about the very practical things they do to support the needy. In many places there are Vinnies shops: often they need volunteers to assist in the shop, or it may be that a visit to the shop will help students to become involved.

Activities for Students

- Find out more about Frederic Ozanam as a good role model.
- Think of some local heroes – maybe athletes, football or netball players, swimmers, etc, who give back to communities. For example, some sport people give up their time and talent to become involved with groups of children who would otherwise not have access to playing sport. Sometimes, teams of sport players visit remote Indigenous communities and provide opportunities for children to become engaged with sport and physical fitness.



CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS BEATITUDE 2?

*“Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.”*

Teacher Information

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

Jesus teaches that experiences of sadness and sorrow are part of human life. Everyone will, at some stage in life, be sad and experience the loneliness of someone suffering a terminal illness, someone dying or being injured seriously in a car accident, for example.

Each of these experiences can be named as grief; they involve, grief, cause us great sadness and sorrow, and sometimes leave us feeling helpless and alone. In times like these, we need to know there are people around close by who can support us and help us through the grief and sorrow as we mourn. Kind words and thoughts, expressions of friendship and offers of practical help can enable us to cope.

Mourning can be caused by many things. Sometimes when we fail to live well according to Jesus’ code of conduct, we can experience a real grief and sorrow knowing we have not lived up to what we know to be true and good. At times, our choices are poor because our words and actions affect others and can cause pain and suffering. When we realise this truth, we are invited to make amends with ourselves, others and God, and then we will be comforted. This is a kind of sorrow that is overcome by seeking forgiveness and being sorry for the hurt we have caused.

Jesus shows us that when we know our need for forgiveness and express our sorrow, we will be blessed by God and will be restored in our relationships.

Activities for Students

- Think about some of the simple ways we can comfort others and be comforted ourselves. Refer to pages 12, 13 for examples of mourning/ grief at the personal, national and global levels.
- Brainstorm/share experiences of mourning and grief that you have become aware of through the media.
- Discuss some of the daily news headlines for current and urgent expressions of the reality of mourning and the need for comfort. What shape or form might this take if we were to choose a critical situation and do something about it?



Teacher Information

Read the scripture story of Jesus' visit to his friends Martha and Mary when their brother Lazarus was ill and then died before Jesus got there. In this story, we hear that Jesus wept; he was troubled, saddened and mourned the loss of a beloved friend. Jesus' human experience of suffering and sorrow were real. He knew what it meant to love and then lose someone; he also knew what it meant to be comforted by his friends. He needed to spend time with them.

Teachers

Offer a brief explanation to students, depending on their age, about grief using this type of language:

It can often be difficult to know how to support someone who is experiencing grief or loss in their lives. We are often unable to find the words that might be helpful. Sometimes a response could simply be letting a person know that you are thinking of them; it might be that you let them know you are around if they need you.

A good thing to do is to take a few minutes to wonder what it might be like if you were the one suffering grief or loss: what would you hope your friends might do to help you along?

This issue of suffering and sorrow is not an easy topic to think about, so a good thing to do could be to talk to your friends, or in small groups, and name the issue; try to name some of the feelings you have in response to situations where you can see people suffering.

Activities for Students

Refer back to the story of Jesus with his friends. Discuss and respond.

- How did Jesus react when he heard the news of the death of his good friend Lazarus?
- How did he show his grief?
- What did his friends do to help him at this sad time?
- When have you felt sad like Jesus? What made you feel better?



CHAPTER 3

WHAT IS BEATITUDE 3?

*“Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit
the earth.”*

Teacher Information

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”

Meekness is a word that gets bad press. It’s not a word we often hear being used, and yet Jesus had something challenging to say about it when he spoke about meekness and the meek in his third Beatitude.

Think about this:

What does it mean to be meek?

What are some of the words that come to mind when you hear someone spoken about as being meek?

Sometimes the way people use this word can be as a put-down: if someone is described as meek, then it often suggests a weak character.

The way Jesus uses this word is to describe a special kind of strength in a person – not someone easily swayed by the opinions of others, but someone able to stand on their own feet and be strong in their views and their actions.

For Jesus, the meek person is someone who sees the truth in the events taking place, in the actions of people, and in their own actions and responses to life situations.

The meek are the people we might refer to as ‘the salt of the earth,’ meaning they are solid and dependable and not afraid to call out injustices and wrong-doing.

They know how to take responsibility for their words, actions and relationships with people, while at the same time showing respect and care for others.

Activities for Students

- Come up with your own examples of what it means to be meek in your home/school/class setting.
- Brainstorm alternative words to describe meekness.



CHAPTER 4

WHAT IS BEATITUDE 4?

*“Blessed are those who hunger
and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.”*



Teacher Information

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

At a personal level, if we experience even a slight amount of hunger and thirst, we can usually find something to eat and drink and then we feel better; our energy returns, and we can get on with things. What we can experience, if we are without food and drink for a period of time, is unwellness, lethargy and other physical symptoms.

We can also hunger for other things, apart from food. For example, we can hunger, or experience the need for friends and family who care about us; we can hunger for good living conditions and homes; we can hunger for opportunities – to do further study, to learn a trade, to gain employment. We can hunger for friendship and company.

When we consider our world community, we hear about widespread hunger and thirst for basic necessities in life: countries where crops and other food supplies are destroyed or not given a chance to grow due to catastrophic events such as floods, famines and other disasters. On a daily basis, we hear, and see, millions of people affected by these realities. The hunger and thirst experienced by millions of people is way beyond our comprehension and experience.

The notions of hungering and thirsting for justice or righteousness call us forward to action and restoring of balances, particularly when we see the huge imbalances of power, resources and relationships that affect millions.

Activities for Students

- Explore with the rest of the class some of the things they hunger and thirst for. As an example, refer to Foodbank that provides breakfast for school children that relates to hunger and thirst in real terms. What other things can people hunger and thirst for?
- Discuss what the effects of lack of food and water might mean in society. Examples of these effects are: a break-down in some areas of society, with desperate people breaking in and stealing food goods; lack of clean water for drinking, cooking, and cleaning can lead to the spread of disease. Crops are affected, if not destroyed; many people have to walk long distances to collect some drinking water for their families.

- Think about the needy poor and hungry people in our communities. Check out websites and print material for local organisations such as Vinnies, the Salvos, Foodbank, night shelters for homeless women and men. Frederic Ozanam is a great Christian role model to research the work of Vinnies.

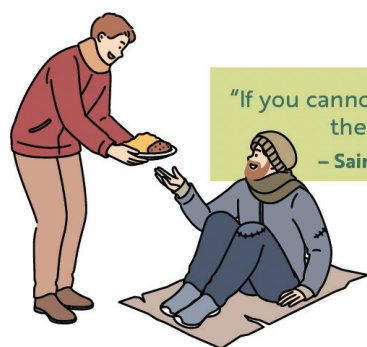
Research any of these local charitable organisations. Include these questions:

- Who founded the organisation?
- What challenges did they meet along the way as they tried to seek support and get organised?
- What is the mission statement for some of these group?
- How do they go about seeking local community support to meet the real needs of those who hunger and thirst for life?

Mini Vinnies – Student Activities

Many Catholic schools set up groups of students known as Mini Vinnies. They aim to act locally to raise awareness of such needs in their school communities. They then work out what is most helpful at a particular time. In the winter months, Mini Vinnies groups often have clothing or blanket drives, and collections of soup cans. In the Christmas season, there are hamper contributions for needy families. In some places, students set up gardens and grow veggies that can then be made into soup for the local soup kitchen.

- Think about how you can come up with a plan of action for supporting the needy with nourishment and get the local community on board for support.
- Do an internet search on some of the bigger world organisations and study their reports and actions in addressing world hunger. The United Nations World Health Organisation provides a wealth of up-to-date information and statistics related to issues such as famines, droughts, widespread unemployment, lack of good housing, homelessness.
- Investigate and discuss the issue of water shortage.
 - What is the impact of lack of water for millions of people, for crops, for eco-systems, for polluted rivers and other water ways?
 - What can we do locally to conserve water and use it thoughtfully?



"If you cannot feed a hundred people,
then feed just one."
– Saint Teresa of Calcutta

Teacher Information

Jesus was very clear on the importance of restoring the balance in relationships with people and not causing further suffering. In the story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus, a taxman, we see Jesus reaching out to Zacchaeus and giving him the opportunity to reflect on what was wrong with his life, causing him to be lonely, isolated and even hated by many.

Zacchaeus knew he needed to own up about his life and the very real suffering he had caused. Jesus enabled him to name what was wrong and to do something about it. He restored Zacchaeus and praised him for his efforts to put things right. By taking this action, Zacchaeus was considered righteous, that is, able to live in peace with his fellow human beings.

Activities for Students

In this gospel story, Jesus teaches us some important lessons.

- Re-read the story. Imagine that you are Zacchaeus and you are bursting with things to talk about with Jesus. How did you feel when Jesus noticed you and invited himself to have dinner with you at your home?
- Take some time to write about the story, with you at the centre of it as a person desperate to be noticed.
 - How did you explain to Jesus why you were up a sycamore tree?
 - What did it feel like to have Jesus take notice of you?
 - How did you feel after you had talked to Jesus and come up with a plan of action for mending the relationships in your life that had gone wrong?
 - What did you say to Jesus as he was leaving you?
 - What did you learn from your meeting with Jesus?
- Write a second account of this meeting with Zacchaeus. You may wish to write a screen play or improvise a scene, acting it out. This time, look at the story from Jesus' point of view.
 - What do you think Jesus might have been thinking about Zacchaeus climbing a sycamore tree to be noticed?
 - How did you (as Jesus) begin the dinner conversation with Zacchaeus?
 - What did you notice about Zacchaeus? Was he nervous? What did you think he was going to say to you?
 - Why did you decide to have dinner with Zacchaeus that night?
 - How did the evening finish up?
 - What do you think Zacchaeus was feeling?



CHAPTER 5

WHAT IS BEATITUDE 5?

*“Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.”*

Teacher Information

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.”

Mercy is a quality that is characterised by a willingness to forgive people when they have harmed us in any way. Sometimes it can seem to be an incredibly difficult thing to do, and yet, Jesus sets great store by forgiving and healing those who suffered in any way. Sometimes, it can be harder for us to forgive ourselves when we realise we have harmed other people, taken them for granted or ignored them completely.

Profile of a merciful person:

- **Forgiving:** Someone who is big enough to accept an apology and forgive someone who has hurt them (mercy and compassion are often linked).
- **Compassionate:** Compassion comes from the heart and calls us to stand in the shoes of the other person, and try to understand their actions so that we can forgive.
- **Empathetic:** Merciful people show empathy for others; they try to understand what is happening for the other person and how they might be feeling.

This Beatitude calls each of us to show mercy and compassion to others through the act of forgiveness.

Teachers

At the local level, consider the work of our emergency services, such as the Fire Brigade, St John Ambulance, nurses and doctors who volunteer to work in developing countries. Explore the possibility of inviting someone from any of these organisations to come along and describe their work, the people and needs they come across, how they support those who come to them, and how they make known the needs to the wider community. Find out what it takes to become actively involved in these works of mercy.

Activities for Students

Explore the meanings of the words mercy, compassion, forgiveness and empathy. These are qualities that illustrate what a merciful person would do. Some examples:

- There may be a family going through tough times and in need of material support, food, clothing, baby-sitting.
- It may be that an organisation such as Caritas International puts out an urgent call for donations to support families and individuals in dire need.
- Closer to home, it may be that we meet people who are lost, lonely or in need of a friend to take interest in them. All of these – and more – are opportunities for us to become merciful as Jesus was merciful.
- There are some practical works of mercy that we can explore for use in a local plan of action to do something for those in great need:
 - Feed the hungry; provide water for the thirsty; offer shelter; donate clothes, shoes, blankets etc. visit the sick and lonely; contribute money. What are some more examples?



Teacher Information

The Forgiving Father (Luke 15:11-32)

In this parable, Jesus placed the forgiving father at the centre of the story. From a practical point of view at the time of Jesus, the father should have wiped his hands of this son who had rejected him and wished him dead. And yet, we are told that the father kept hope alive that his son might return, and it was with a heart full of compassion that he eventually saw his son coming down the road and ran out to meet him and restore him to his family.

Jesus shows us that this is how God is with us: always loving us and looking out for us to draw us closer to God.

Teachers

Read the story to the students and allow some time for them to think about the story and how they feel about it. There may be a range of views: some may react as the elder son did; others might respond to the father's actions; others still might relate to the younger son.

This story lends itself to a dramatic replay where students take on the role of the father, the elder son and the younger – or prodigal – son.

- Organise several 'students groups' to reenact the story.
- Ask students to compare the similarity and differences of each performance, and how they might differ from the original story.

Activities for Students

- Explore the story:
 - Why did Jesus tell this parable?
 - What did he mean by telling it?
- What do you think is the main message of the story?



Teacher Information

Pope Francis speaks often in his talks and writings about mercy. He says that the message of Jesus is mercy and that the Lord never tires of forgiving us, and that the name of God is mercy.

Pope Francis has also written a lot about the environment, ecology and the responsibility of human kind understanding that together, people and creation give praise to God. One of the letters of Pope Francis on this theme is called *Laudato Si'*. This document is extremely important and is being explored by communities around the world.

During his term as Pope, Francis has written extensively about all of creation as interconnected – one family. He talks about the environment as our common home in *Laudato Si'*. His most recent letter about ecology is *Laudate Deum*. In this letter he calls us to urgent action to confront the climate crisis.

Activities for Students

- Find out more about Pope Francis and his teachings. A good source – via the internet – is his homilies at the daily gathering of people in St Peter's Square.
- Refer to some key passages or themes to identify the concerns and hopes expressed by Pope Francis as he teaches about our need to care for the fragile earth.
- We sometimes use the term 'eco warrior' to describe someone who is passionate about caring for the earth and protecting our natural environment and wildlife.
 - Would you consider Pope Francis to be an 'eco warrior'?
 - Why?
 - How does he provide a good example in this area?



CHAPTER 6

WHAT IS BEATITUDE 6?

*“Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.”*

Teacher Information

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

The words ‘pure’ and ‘purity’ mean clean and clear. When they are used in relation to this sixth Beatitude, they suggest the following:

- clarity of purpose
- the ability to grasp what needs to be done
- being straight-forward and pro-active.

We know that the word ‘heart’ refers to the central, life-giving organ in the body. When we put these two words together and describe people who are pure in heart, these are some of the things we mean:

- seeing things as God sees them
- sharing God’s love with others
- being able to be of service to others.

In Scripture, the words of the Prophet Micah give us a summary of what it means to be pure in heart:

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

Micah: 6:6-8

This Beatitude challenges us to have clear or pure hearts so that we will see God in the lives of people we come across daily; being pure in heart also enables us to acknowledge the quiet acts of kindness of others.

Activities for Students

- Plan a ‘Random Acts of Kindness Day.’ Be on the lookout for opportunities to be kind and thoughtful.



Teacher Information

It takes a conscious effort for us to be attuned to the presence of God in our ordinary lives. Sometimes it is easier for us to experience a sense of the presence of God in a beautiful experience of nature: in a sunrise, or sunset, in a cloud-free, warm day; in the middle of a storm; in the singing of the birds and in the mountains, hills and natural trees and flowers that colour our world.

We also experience the presence of God in the laughter of children, in the company of friends. Reflect on how and where you might expect to feel the presence of God in your life today.



Activities for Students

- Discuss this question: Where can I see God now on Earth?
- Create a visual representation or write about these experiences.

Teacher Information

The parable of the Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11-19)

Jesus told a story about ten lepers who came to him because they knew he could heal them. At the time of Jesus, people suffering from this disease were excluded from their families and from being in the towns and villages because of the risk of infection of others.

When they came to Jesus and asked to be cured, Jesus did so and sent them off to the priest to show him they had been cured and could thus return to their homes and families. Only one of the cured lepers came back to thank Jesus, who acknowledged that it was the faith of the man that had enabled him to be cured.

Another important lesson from this parable is the importance of gratitude, giving thanks to God for the healing and restoration to family life.

Activities for Students

- Create a gratitude journal and begin to journal daily on good things that happen today.



CHAPTER 7

WHAT IS BEATITUDE 7?

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

Teacher Information

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

Peace is something that can be described in many ways. One way of looking at the meaning of peace is to think about it as the absence of war and violence, and anything that upsets the balance of life between peoples, in family life.

The challenge to people is to become peacemakers. This implies a way of living that shows respect to all people; that seeks positive ways of addressing conflict and that helps to build a society where everyone can live safe and productive lives. On a smaller scale, fights between people, disagreements, arguments, outbursts of anger and violent behaviour are things that prevent the establishment of peace.

Peace is not just about the absence of war and conflict, seen at many levels. It is also about proposing a way of looking at life and people, and finding positive ways to relate and support one another.

Note: some of the facts and statistics relating to lack of peace can be very disturbing, but they can also help us to do something for and on behalf of those in many countries who are always in situations of conflict and lack of opportunity to live any differently.

“If you want peace, work for justice.”

Activities for Students

Over the years many individuals have been named and celebrated for their efforts to bring about peace in the world.

- Research peacemakers who have received the United Nations Nobel Peace Prize. Who are some of these people and what was their unique contribution to the establishment of world peace? Explore what their outlook on life led them to do on behalf of peace in the world.
- Form small groups with the task of looking at what would make for a peaceful society and world. This issue could be looked at from the local community/ neighbourhood scene, the national and the international scenes.
- Encourage students to brainstorm ideas around the theme of peace. Organise a class debate or an artistic representation on the statement: “If you want peace, work for justice.”





Teacher Information

What does a peacemaker look like? Think about some of the qualities of people you know who bring peace to others and to difficult situations. In his teachings and example, Jesus showed the importance of welcoming and trying to understand people; he taught that all people are loved by God and are honoured by God; he showed the importance of repairing conflict and restoring friendships and family relationships; he showed that the way to restoring peace is through forgiveness.

Sometimes it seemed to his disciples that Jesus did nothing, when they thought he ought to be settling difficult situations. Instead, Jesus took time out! He had a special relationship with children and delighted in being with them. He welcomed them and spent time with them when other adults would have liked to send them away.

Read the story of Jesus with children in Matthew's gospel (Matt:18:1-5). He not only liked being with them, but he told the adults present that unless they became like children, they would not enter the kingdom of heaven. So, in fact, Jesus honours children for their openness, curiosity, and wonder.

Activities for Students

- Imagine you were with Jesus when he sat down and spoke to a group of children. Jesus let the children know how important they were to him – and he let the adults present know that too!
- What might have been some of the conversation going on with Jesus and the children? How did the children react to Jesus? Do you think they might have felt special? Why? If you were one of those children, what would you most like to ask Jesus about?
- In small groups, do a role play about this story.

Teacher Information

Jesus taught that peace is a gift. If peace is a gift, how do we know we have it? If we are also called to be peace-makers, this means bringing and sharing God's peace with others.

Activities for Students

- Invite students to design posters with peaceful images and some slogans. Hold your own class art exhibition around the theme of peace: at home, in our local community and in the global community. What are some universal symbols of peace?
- Research the life of St Teresa of Calcutta who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Find out what she did that was so important.



CHAPTER 8

WHAT ARE BEATITUDES 8 AND 9?

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”

Teacher Information

Beatitude 8

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Beatitude 9

“Blessed are you when people revile you and utter all kinds of evil against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”

These last two Beatitudes contain some harsh words: persecution, evil words, being reviled, or hated. What are we supposed to make of these two Beatitudes?

Surely being hated or persecuted are not good and positive experiences. In each of these Beatitudes, we need to look carefully at the second part of the Beatitude, because that gives us a clue as to what Jesus intended.

As a way into these Beatitudes, take time to name issues such as persecution, suffering at the hands of others, name-calling, bullying, victimising because of any kind of difference: race, colour, beliefs, clothing, etc.

Once again, tap into the present world and experience of students. Issues like bullying and name-calling are rife in some areas of our society.

- How do we feel when we are the ones being victimised or bullied?
- Where do we go to address or make known the issues?
- What does it feel like to be in that position? Imagine what life must be like for refugee groups coming to Australia with little or no language, physical resources or real possibilities for meeting their physical needs.

In raising these issues, Jesus is not proposing that persecution, such as bullying are good things – the opposite is true. What he is saying is that these things are realities for many people and they are not life-giving. However, for those who are persecuted and treated unjustly, on his account, then their endurance earns for them a place in the kingdom of heaven. For all those who suffer such things and continue to believe in Jesus, their reward will be great in heaven – a cause for rejoicing and gladness. The important thing is that those who follow Jesus, trust in him and his teaching, even though they experience difficulties.

These issues have been around for centuries. The early Christians were often persecuted and tortured for their belief in Jesus. Many willingly gave their lives rather than deny Jesus. Several of the apostles gave their lives rather than deny Jesus. We call these people martyrs, or witnesses to Jesus.



Activities for Students

These two Beatitudes lend themselves to robust debate or discussion. Analyse with the students what they see happening around them.

- Investigate and report to the class. Are there refugees in the class or school who may be experiencing difficulties – with learning, language difficulties, social difficulties that prevent them from fitting in, lack of resources to take part in a range of school-related activities?
- Is there evidence of racism, sexism or harassment because some students are different? What can be done about these situations?



Teacher Information

What would/did Jesus do in the face of such opposition? Jesus showed that hitting back and using abusive language towards those who opposed him for being different was not the way to go.

Jesus maintained his dignity in the face of false accusations; he also respected the dignity of his persecutors, while not giving in to them. Jesus showed an ability to move on, to find positive ways of relating to people, even those who abused him. He did not strike back, physically. A challenge for us in such situations might be to stop and wonder how Jesus might have reacted. As followers of Jesus, we have to do something!

Activities for Students

Discussion

- How can we follow this example of Jesus today when we are faced with any of the above difficulties?
- What might make it difficult for us to stand up and be counted for our actions?
- How difficult is it for us to take a stand, when we know others might not feel the same way?
- Do you know of any examples of people who have done this?

Journal

- Journal a response to this issue of maintaining our dignity and respecting the dignity of people we find it hard to love. Naming our feelings, at least to ourselves, can be a good way forward in understanding what Jesus was on about and how he treated people in these situations.



Teacher Information

Good Christian role models provide us with insights as to how to be true followers of Jesus. These people have ‘got the message’ and have responded to Jesus’ call in the Beatitudes.

People like Irene McCormack, an Australian Sister of St Joseph worked in a remote village in the mountains of Peru. She was an ordinary person, living her life among the villagers and she was killed for her work.

Maximilian Kolbe is another person who gave his life for someone else while he was at Auschwitz concentration camp. Prior to this, during the second world war, he assisted hundreds of Jewish people: he fed, clothed and hid them, ultimately paying the price with his life. This was an outcome of his desire to live by love rather than by hatred. There are many others throughout history who have made an important contribution because of their belief in Jesus and their willingness to live by the code of behaviour announced in the Beatitudes.

Activities for Students

On Anzac Day, we honour and respect the memories of all who died at war to ensure that we could enjoy peace today. In a very real way, they gave their lives for us. Think about the sacrifice Maximilian Kolbe made when he took the place of another prisoner and gave up his life so that the prisoner could go free. This is an example of someone giving their own life out of love for another human being.

- Why do you think it is important to remember such stories of bravery? Do you know of anyone, maybe in your extended family, who might have served in the armed forces during the war?
- Begin a conversation about some of the heroes for our country. What might their stories teach us about how to live our lives today?



CHAPTER 9

WHAT IS THE NEW COMMANDMENT?

“Love one another.”



Teacher Information

'Love one another as I have loved you.'

In Matthew's gospel, as indicated earlier, Jesus is presented as the new lawgiver, the new Moses. The law that Jesus came to communicate to humankind was vastly different for the people of his times; they were accustomed to laws governing every possible kind of activity and aspect of human life, so much so that the law was actually a burden.

The gospels show us a Jesus who was in touch with human life and day to day experiences of joy, friendship, laughter, sorrow, grief, successes and failures. For Jesus, the law governing the lives of his followers was to be a law of love.

Jesus put people first. If someone was suffering an illness or was isolated or alone, Jesus was there beside them; he enjoyed happy times with his friends and alone times with God, in prayer.

The Beatitudes Jesus shared with his followers outlined for them a way to live as he did. They provide us today with a framework for good living, happiness and holiness. In a nutshell, Jesus encouraged his followers to be: Poor in spirit, merciful, meek and humble of heart, pure in heart, aware of those who mourn, be peacemakers, love all people, just as he did.

The Beatitudes provide us with a framework for behaving in such a way that it is possible for us to take on board what Jesus is asking of us. At the heart of Jesus' mission is his love for all of us: each of the Beatitudes gives us a window into how we are to love one another. They show us how to live well, to be happy and to be supportive of others in need.

Activities for Students

For the people in Jesus' time who heard these words, 'love one another as I have loved you', there must have been shock and disbelief. Discuss in class or in groups the notion of what Jesus meant:

- Do we have to love those who cheat, hurt and cause suffering?
- Who are some of the people I would not feel comfortable with?
- What is the challenge facing me?
- What are the qualities Jesus spoke of that would help us?
- Have a class debate about the new commandment and identify people in our world today who we are unable to find love for. Is there an alternative to love? Explore the notion of compassion instead.

What the Beatitudes challenge us to do is to move out of our comfort zones and to become aware of the many groups within our local, national and global communities who struggle to live. Reflect on some of these groups and ask the questions:

- What would Jesus do?
- How do we get started?
- What are some practical things we can do?

Chapters 9 –
WHAT IS THE NEW
COMMANDMENT?

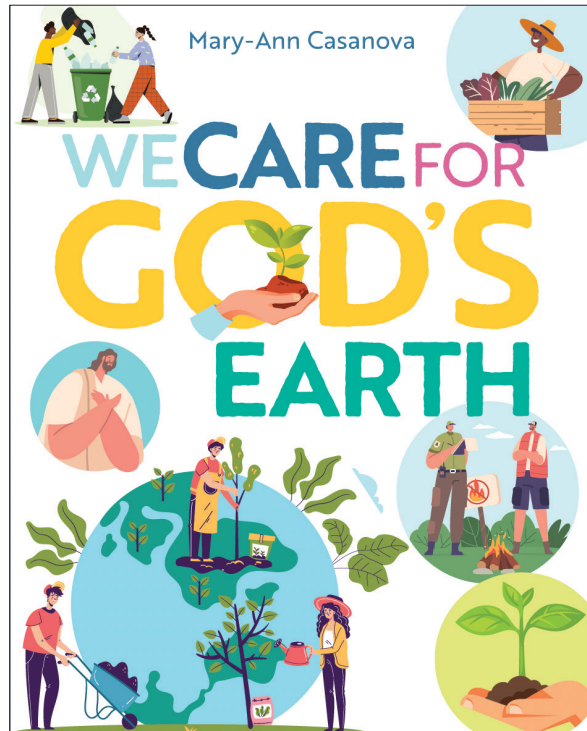
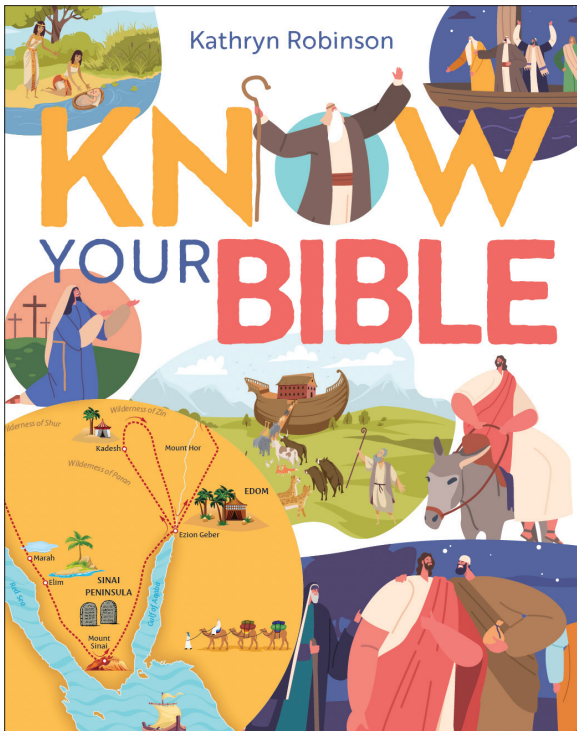
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The Beatitudes have given us a code of behaviour to live by. How can you try to let other people know about this code of behaviour and what it means in real life?

- Create a class art expo on the Beatitudes. You could explore the meaning of each Beatitude through art, and you might like to use colourful posters with key words or name them as be-attitudes: e.g. be-merciful; be-loving; care for one another; be-loving, bring peace,
- Make some Beatitude bracelets or friendship bands with a key message on each one.
- Prepare some greeting cards with your favourite Beatitude.
- Include a fund-raising and fun activity, like a crazy hair day, have an op shop dress-up day, ask parents to help you make cup-cakes for school, have a mini marathon day – laps around the oval, shooting for goals, novelty events – all for small donations for a favourite charity.
- Write an article or short notice for the parish newsletter, describing your be-attitude day and inviting them to come along and take part in the activities.
- At the end of the day, or soon after, have a chat in class about what happened on this day, what were your favourite activities, what did it teach you about what Jesus might have done? If he were there on that day, what do you think he might have been thinking about you and your efforts to include all people?



ALSO IN THIS SERIES from Garratt Publishing



32 Glenvale Crescent, Mulgrave, VIC 3170
FREE CALL: 1300 650 878
Telephone: (03) 8545 2911
(International +613 8545 2911)
Website: www.garrattpublishing.com.au
Email: sales@garrattpublishing.com.au