

THE BEATITUDES: PORTRAIT OF THE MASTER
PART 1: HOLINESS FOR ALL

“Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because your reward will be great in heaven” (Matthew 5: 11-12).

Rejoice and Be Glad is the title of Pope Francis’ latest apostolic exhortation. In it, he reminds us that all people, not just the best-known saints and martyrs, are called to holiness, and the Holy Father offers advice on how to answer that call, whatever our state in life. To understand the universal call to holiness, we need to understand what holiness means. Pope Francis describes holiness as “experiencing, in union with Christ, the mysteries of his life,” both the drama of his death and resurrection as well as the quiet moments of his daily life, and modeling the mysteries of Christ in our own lives by loving God and neighbor. “As a result, ‘the measure of our holiness stems from the stature that Christ achieves in us, to the extent that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we model our whole life on his’. Every saint is a message which the Holy Spirit takes from the riches of Jesus Christ and gives to his people” (20-21).

The message of Christ that God wishes to speak through each of our lives varies depending on the person and the experiences that we face. Some are called to heroic witness, like our patron, St. Boniface. Most are called to simple, daily acts of holiness, as Pope Francis describes: “I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God’s people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance I see the holiness of the Church militant. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbors, those who, living in our midst, reflect God’s presence. We might call them ‘the middle class of holiness’” (7).

The message of Christ that we become for the world through lives of holiness is expressed simply and purely in the Beatitudes, which Pope Francis calls a “Christian’s identity card’ and a “portrait of the master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives” (63). Taking Pope Francis’ lead, and building on his own thoughts in *Rejoice and Be Glad*, I will reflect for the next several weeks on the Beatitudes as a path to holiness for all. Whoever we are, whatever circumstances we face, Christ calls all of us to holiness. May our reflections together over the next few weeks help each of take the next step on that path.