

The Beatitudes for parents

Blessed are you parents who are poorer than some because you put children first -- your own kids ahead of fancy cars, expensive homes, luxury vacations, and the kind of all-consuming job it would take to pay for it all. Blessed are you for putting other children ahead as well: the kids you can name whom you coach, guide, or tutor -- the nameless kids who get to eat or learn or live because money is something you give away instead of grab.

Blessed are you parents who mourn -- mourn the loss of innocence in a culture that has kids growing up too fast; mourn the plight of the world's hungry, homeless, destitute children who grow up too fast for reasons entirely different; mourn with the bottomless ache of a parent whose child will never grow up, who has lost a precious-precious child of your own.

Blessed are you parents who show mercy -- your children will see shining in you one of the best reasons of all to call our God "Father," how it really is possible to love our neighbors, even our enemies, as our self. A hard world grown obsessed with perfection, fairness, and revenge will become a softer place for your kids to land knowing that they can (again and again) fail and still (always, always) merit love.

Blessed are you parents who are pure of heart -- who forfeit the human temptation to gossip or brag or blame. You teach your children that true self-worth comes from within, in right relationship to God and neighbor, not in the false security of putting others down in order to make yourself feel superior.

Blessed are you parents who are peacemakers -- who put yourself in a crossfire of relationships when there are warring factions in your school, your parish, or your extended family; who teach your children how to negotiate their needs while affording others theirs and their dignity as well. The efforts you make to have each side see things from the other's point of view, to muster a little more empathy and a little more understanding (even if in the end peace remains elusive), makes you a true child of God.

Blessed are you parents who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness -- who get snickered at for going to church each Sunday instead of the shopping malls, who give away part of everything you own in the belief that it's not yours to hoard in the first place, who spend time teaching the faith to your kids because you know it's a treasure that will never rust. Yours is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you parents when anyone insults you or persecutes your good name for believing in all of these things that Jesus has taught. Rejoice and be glad: your reward will be great in heaven as it already is right now, on earth, when you teach your children these things by your powerful example.