CHAPTER TWENTY: NORMATIVE PRINCIPLES, VIRTUES, VICES, AND BEATITUDES--PART I

A. What is the first mode of responsibility?

The order of treatment here is that of the beatitudes. Hence, the first mode of responsibility is "first" merely in the sense that it corresponds to the first beatitude.

The first mode is: Do not be deterred by emotional inertia from acting for intelligible goods. One who violates this mode of responsibility fails without any real reason to act for a human good, and so does not proceed consistently with integral human fulfillment.

At times one thinks of acting for a certain good, but hesitates to do so, not because there is another interesting possibility to consider nor because the action would involve accepting any intelligible evil which must be taken into account, but simply because one feels sluggish, lazy, discouraged, depressed, unenthusiastic, or the like.

The relevant situation must be distinguished from one in which, for example, awareness of fatigue leads one to choose rest as an intelligible good--the discontinuance of work for a night's sleep, which is necessary for health and renewed vigor. It also must be distinguished from a situation in which one is deterred from acting by concern about some significant obstacle--for example, when one chooses not to engage in a sport which might be too strenuous and risky, considering the physical condition one is in.

An example of a violation of this mode of responsibility is the following: One has had an adequate night's sleep and had set the alarm to begin the day in time for morning prayer. When the alarm sounds, one knows one should get up, but does not do so at once and dozes off again. Again, parents realize that they should do something about an abnormal condition from which one of their children appears to be suffering, but do not get around to doing anything about it.

The virtuous disposition which corresponds to this mode of responsibility has various aspects; it often is named with reference to particular areas of action. Some of these aspects are referred to by some uses of "ambitious," "energetic," "diligent," "industrious," "enthusiastic," and so on. Words for the opposite include "lazy," "sluggish," "lackadaisical," "slothful," and "dilatory."

Even apart from Christian revelation, divine revelation deepens the foundation for this human mode of responsibility by making God known as always active and creative, by indicating His readiness to help those who try to do good, by showing the inherent dignity of human work within the unfolding plan of providence, and especially by holding out hope for a real improvement in the human condition. The greatest deterrent to effort is the sense of hopelessness induced by evil, which cuts off opportunities and leads to failure in efforts toward good. The revelation of God as liberator leads to a renewal of hope, and with hope comes energy.

B. Some Scriptural indications of this mode of responsibility

The sluggard is advised to learn from the industrious ant (cf. Prv 6.6-8) and is compared with a stone in the mud or a lump of dung (cf. Sir 22.1-2). Sleepiness is disparaged: "How long, O sluggard, will you rest? when will you rise from your sleep?" (Prv 6.9). The answer is that while the sluggard naps, poverty and want will sneak up like bandits (cf. Prv 6.10-11). Torpor is characteristic of fools; to teach them is like trying to talk to someone in a deep sleep, who at the end of the lesson says: "'What was that?'" (Sir 22.8).

St. Paul urges his converts to encourage the listless and to work hard themselves (1 Thess 4.11; 5.14; 2 Thess 3.7-12). He clearly regards laziness as a vice. For himself and his fellow workers, he claims credit for hard work and sleepless nights (cf. 2 Cor 6.5; 11.27). Christian life is urgent business: "Take care to do all these things, for you know the time in which we are living. It is now the hour for you to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith" (Rom 13.11). The Christian who grows lazy (as part of a general pattern of lukewarmness) is crucifying the Son of God a second time (cf. Heb 6.6, 12).

Constant preparedness is a Christian virtue necessary in view of the coming fulfillment: "'Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake!'" (Mk 13.33). One is a servant whose master might return at any moment; one must not be caught asleep (cf. Mk 13.34-36). The point is remarkable and seldom appreciated. Jesus does not here warn against being caught doing something wrong, but against being caught in the most innocent imaginable condition--asleep. The parable of the silver pieces teaches a similar lesson. Servants are to be reliable and industrious, not merely to keep safe the gifts they receive. The servant who failed to make a gain on the funds left in his care is condemned as worthless and lazy (cf. Mt 25.26). A false sense of caution and nervous reluctance to take the minimal risk of acting is no excuse; the unprofitable servant loses what little he had and is condemned to exterior darkness (cf. Mt 25.29-30).

C. What is the first mode of Christian response?

In the fallen human condition, the prevalence of evil and the lack of confidence that action for good will make much difference is the primary obstacle to fulfillment of the first mode of responsibility. An important aspect of the discouraging situation is that one realizes that even if one does act for good, others are unlikely to do so; hence, the good which might be achieved with their cooperation and cannot be achieved without it is hardly going to be realized no matter how hard one tries. As I explained in section A, even prior to revelation in Christ divine revelation deepens the mode of responsibility and provides some hope, which should help to encourage people to pursue the good.

However, many people who do not believe are energetic and ambitious; some are very industrious and seldom caught napping. How do they manage to display such dispositions? The answer usually is that they are motivated by a desire for personal satisfaction or for some particular goal. These motives are at least dangerous; they are likely to lead to unfairness, excessive attachment, and the expedient use of questionable methods; in

extreme cases the energetic and ambitious person becomes a zealot and a fanatic. In short, the reason why in this fallen world the merely lazy person does not seem vicious is that most of the actual alternatives to this disposition are more or less worse. The energetic are oppressors. The dead are better off than the living and the unborn still better off: "Then I saw that all toil and skillful work is the rivalry of one man for another. This also is vanity and a chase after wind" (Eccl 4.4).

Christian revelation, accepted with living faith, changes this prospect. One has grounds for a much greater hope, one which transcends death and all evil. Good acts will last forever. But there is a point in pursuing goods in this way only if one avoids all the usual, questionable motives for doing so, for the heavenly fulfillment certainly will not be available unless one is fair to others, detached, and unwilling to use bad means. The success of one's undertakings is guaranteed, instead, by divine power and love. God will give success, will prosper the work of one's hands, as He gave success to Jesus by raising Him from the dead. Thus the Christian mode of response is: Expect and accept all good, including the good fruits of one's own work, as God's gift.

One who responds in this way will not be a lazy and unprofitable servant, but an industrious and diligent one. Yet as a servant, such a person will be able to be energetic without falling into the vices which normally characterize an energetic disposition. One can be devoted without zealotry and fanaticism to the coming of the kingdom. One counts on God for success and credits successes to Him.

The virtuous disposition present in this mode of Christian response is referred to most often as "humility." Childlike simplicity, which recognizes need, asks, and willingly receives, is an aspect of humility. Humility also involves thankfulness--the basic Christian attitude of gratitude--for in humility one recognizes that all good comes from God and that one's whole life must be a eucharistic return to Him of all He has given. "Pride" signifies the Christian vice opposed to humility; it is best understood as pelagian self-reliance, a presumption of mature autonomy, and a disposition of ingratitude toward God.

The first beatitude is: "'How blest are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs'" (Mt 5.3). "Poverty in spirit" was most often understood by the Fathers, and still is taken by many scholars, to mean humility of mind and will, which disposes one to recognize one's need for God's gifts (as a poor person is aware of his or her need) and so to ask for them without regard for the lowly status and dependence this asking admits, and to be grateful for everything received as a self-confident and proud person cannot be.[1]

In His excoriation of the scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus prefaces a series of woes with a criticism of their various forms of status-seeking, which express their pride, and concludes: "'Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, but whoever humbles himself shall be exalted'" (Mt 23.12). Those who are poor in spirit do not seek status; like the economically indigent, they realize that they have no status to seek.

One whose primary love is charity is disposed to divine goodness before all else. God's goodness is real quite apart from one's effort and action; hence, one's own work and its fruits can be sought and accepted only as a share, freely and generously given by God, in His own fullness.

According to Augustine, the gift of the Spirit which corresponds to the first beatitude is the fear of the Lord--that is, childlike reverence toward Him.[2] St. Thomas teaches that this fear is related to the virtue of hope, for by this fear we are open to the Spirit and unwilling to withdraw ourselves from His help, on which we totally and utterly depend.[3]

D. What is most proper to Christian humility

Humility is a virtue praised throughout the Bible. Jacob exemplified the virtue in his recognition of his own unworthiness, his dependence upon God, and God's generous gifts (cf. Gn 32.10). In the course of the history of Israel, the few became wealthy, oppressive, and irreligious; the many were poor, oppressed, and comparatively pious. During the time of the prophets and in the psalms there came to be a virtual identification between poverty and piety. The poor have no sense of self-sufficiency. This situation explains the stress in the New Testament on the affinity between the poor (and also other types of outcasts including self-conscious sinners) and the Gospel. The poor know they need God's intervention, and so they, above others, have the Gospel preached to them (cf. Is 61.1; Mt 11.5; Lk 4.18).[4]

There are intrinsic, even if not absolutely necessary, connections between wealth and pride, poverty and humility. The wealthy can afford to be proud. Their resources give them power, and power gives a sense of control and independence. But the seer tells the wealthy: "'You keep saying, "I am so rich and secure that I want for nothing." Little do you realize how wretched you are, how pitiable and poor, how blind and naked!'" (Rev 3.17). When St. Paul finds it necessary to teach a lesson in humility, he stresses that those to whom he writes have nothing they have not received, and so they have nothing to boast about, yet they are utterly complacent because, as he says ironically, "You have grown rich!" (1 Cor 4.8). The poor, by contrast, realize their own powerlessness, and so they know that anything they have is gratuitous. Thus the poor are disposed to be humble--poor in spirit as well as in material things--they are ready to accept the gift of the kingdom. Since this gift is given freely to those open to it, the poor are blessed, for the kingdom is theirs (cf. Lk 6.20, 24).

Since humility is characteristic of those who are poor, who are lowly--that is, in the lower stratum of society--the voluntary lowering of oneself in status suggests an understanding that wealth and superiority really are poverty and weakness. To lower oneself is a condition of or an expression of making oneself open and receptive, and receptivity is a condition of fulfillment by God's gifts. Hence, those who humble themselves are exalted.

This feature of humility--self-abasement--has been stressed so much in Christian thought that what is more central, namely the disposition of receptivity toward God, often is overlooked. The result is unfortunate, since much Christian preaching and

catechetics seems to encourage self-abasement as if it were a value in itself, whereas it is only morally significant if it is a function of joyfully accepted total dependence upon God.

The centurion who realizes his unworthiness that Jesus enter his home shows humility not by this realization alone but by his recognition of his need for help: "'Just give an order and my boy will get better'" (Mt 8.8). He realizes who has the power and he is prepared to proceed accordingly. The famous passage in which Paul speaks of Jesus' self-emptying, so that He might humble Himself to the extent of accepting death, makes the point that this self-abasement was the way to God's exalting act; by emptying Himself Jesus put Himself in position to be made Lord (cf. Phil 2.6-11). From this Paul draws the conclusion: "It is God who, in his good will toward you, begets in you any measure of desire or achievement" (Phil 2.13). The point is the same as in Paul's account of his humiliating and mysterious thorn in the flesh. It led him to beg relief, and his prayer was answered with the assurance: "'My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection'" (2 Cor 12.9). Paul adds that he boasts of his weakness, so that the power of Christ might rest on him.

The Old Testament already recognized the true character of humility as dependence upon God; one does not find there a confusion with self-abasement, as if this in itself were the virtue. What one does not find outside the New Testament, however, is the perfect synthesis between dependence and fulfillment. Paul does boast; he knows he is tremendously gifted and is not afraid to say so. He also knows the gifts are gifts, nothing else.

Mary's triumphant song of fulfillment, the Magnificat, perfectly illustrates Christian humility. God has looked upon His lowly handmaid; He has lifted up the lowly: "'all ages to come shall call be blessed. God who is mighty has done great things for me'" (Lk 1.48-49). Paul similarly expresses Christian humility when he declares that he is what he is by God's grace, and that this grace has not been fruitless (cf. 1 Cor 15.10).

E. Humility, childlikeness, and prayer

The inculcation of humility as a necessary disposition of Christian life, not as an optional extra, is a standard part of New Testament catechesis (cf. Rom 12.16; 1 Cor 13.4; Eph 4.2; Col 3.12; Jas 4.6, 10). Peter urges Christians to be eager for the milk of the Spirit like newborn babes (1 Pt 2.2), to be humble toward one another (1 Pt 3.8, 5.5),

> because God "is stern with the arrogant but to the humble he shows kindness." Bow humbly under God's mighty hand, so that in due time he may lift you on high. Cast all your cares on him because he cares for you. Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in your faith, realizing that the brotherhood of believers is undergoing the same sufferings throughout the world. The God of all grace, who called you to everlasting glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish those who have suffered a little while (1 Pt 5.5-10).

Here humility is unfolded in its various dimensions: receptivity to God's gifts, preparedness, energy, reverential fear of God, and complete hope in Him.

Jesus teaches that a childlike attitude of humility is a necessary condition for entering the kingdom. The children are to be welcomed, for the kingdom belongs to them, since only those who accept God's reign like little children can share in it (cf. Mk 10,13-16; Mt 19.13-15; Lk 18.15-17). The wise and prudent, prophets and kings, desired the revelation of God in Christ, but it was hidden from them. It is reserved for mere children and for the humble disciples of Jesus; it comes as a freely given gift from the Father through Him (cf. Lk 10.21-22; Mt 11.25-27). When the apostles begin to worry about status, Jesus warns them that they must become as children and be prepared to serve children and the childlike (cf. Mk 9.32-36; Mt 18.1-5; Lk 9.46-48). Not only are goods attained only be being accepted as God's gifts, but also they can be passed on only to others who are similarly willing to accept them. In all these passages, it is the child's humility, not innocence, which is the valuable disposition; the Bible does not regard children as innocent, since all humankind is involved in the corporate state of original sin.

By teaching His followers to think of God as their Father at the outset of His model prayer, Jesus shows the relationship between childlike humility and asking God in prayer for what one needs, namely, awareness of dependence, readiness to receive, confident hope, and persistence in expecting needed goods (cf. Lk 11.1-4, 8.13; Mt 6.9-13, 7.7-11).

Since humility is an essential feature of Christian life, a disposition always necessary, prayer must persist even when at first God seems not to hear. Jesus illustrates this point with the parables of the friend who borrows bread at night (cf. Lk 11.5-8) and the woman who pesters the unjust judge until he responds to her petition (cf. Lk 18.1-8). Most charmingly, the point is shown in the action parable of the miracle performed for the persistent canaanite woman; ready to accept a position analogous to that of a puppy receiving scraps at the table, her humble faith obtains from Jesus the cure she desires (cf. Mk 7.24-30; Mt 15.21-28).

Prayer is effective because it makes one receptive to the good God wishes to give; thanks and praise also are necessary because they express the essential disposition of humility. The point of the parable of the publican and the Pharisee is not so much the former's self-abasement and the latter's conceit (these are significant but secondary factors) as the former's readiness to receive the pardon for which he is praying and the latter's failure to realize that he is totally dependent upon God, who alone does the good works of one's piety (cf. Lk 18.9-14). The Pharisee trusted in himself, was "self-righteous" Lk 18.9). In Luke this parable is followed immediately by the pericope on the children, which says that one must accept God's kingdom as a child to enter it, and is preceded immediately by the parable of the woman who pesters the unjust judge (cf. Lk 18.1-17).

In Mark's gospel, the episode in which Jesus curses the fig tree is divided by His

driving of the money-changers out of the temple (cf. Mk 11.12-26). Although not the season for figs, Jesus seeks fruit on the tree, does not find it, and curses the tree. The group then goes to the temple, where Jesus drives out the money-changers, and asserts that the temple should be a place for prayer. Finally, the next morning the group discover the tree withered, and Jesus gives an instruction on faith and prayer. Many commentators assume that this passage is a rather haphazard collection of items, somehow accidentally connected by merely verbal and stylistic links. Few can make any sense out of the apparently irrational miracle of withering the fig tree when against any reasonable expectation, it had no figs.

The whole passage can be seen as a tightly integrated unit if the cursing of the fig tree is taken as an action parable and the theme of humility and prayer is brought to the surface. Like a fig tree out of season, humankind is fruitless and condemned; human nature cannot produce the fruit God demands of us. The human activity which is within our own power--buying and selling and empty ritual--is worthless. Unlike the fig tree, those gaining wealth in the temple seem to engage in a fruitful activity; like the fig tree, they really do not. What is required is prayer, by which fulfillment is sought from God with the humble disposition essential for receiving it. Thus the temple is cleansed to make it ready for prayer and the disciples are instructed to ask in prayer, for faith can move mountains. Although He does not say so, the meaning of Jesus clearly is that if the fig tree could pray, it could produce fruit, even out of season. Sinfulness is no absolute obstacle; God will forgive those ready to forgive one another (cf. Mk 11.25-26).

Faith in God and in Jesus is the central act expressive of humility. Faith is the readiness to accept God's gift of Himself. Hence Jesus instructs the apostles to ask in His name; if they do so, He will send the Spirit (cf. Jn 14.1, 10-11, 14-17). With this gift, the impediment to energetic and fruitful action is removed. The followers of Jesus do works like His and greater (cf. Jn 14.12). Apart from Jesus one lacks the gift of His Spirit, one is without the vivifying power of divine love; but in Jesus, one becomes truly alive and bears much fruit (cf. Jn 15.1-8).

F. <u>What is the second mode of responsibility?</u>

In various manuscripts of Matthew's gospel the second and third beatitudes differ in order. I take the second beatitude to be that concerning the meek, who inherit the land. The second mode of responsibility is the one which corresponds to this.

The second mode is: Do not be pressed by enthusiasm or impatience to act individualistically for intelligible goods. One who violates this mode of responsibility acts alone (or without regard for the possibilities and needs of common action) without any real reason for such individualism, and so does not proceed consistently with integral human fulfillment, which can be attained only by the fellowship of persons sharing goods in communion.

At times one sees the possibility of acting for a certain good and is aware that the good could be more perfectly attained and more widely enjoyed if one acted in responsible collaboration with others. But one is pressed to act individualistically because one is eager to proceed expeditiously--for instance, because one is enthusiastic and wishes to experience results quickly or because one is impatient and wishes to avoid the inefficiencies and delays of common action.

The relevant situation must be distinguished from one in which, for example, one is responsible for a certain good such as someone's safety, an urgent situation arises, and one acts on one's own without normal consultation and cooperation to take care of the matter. It also must be distinguished from a case in which one undertakes some activity by individual initiative, but shapes one's action with a view to opening it to participation by others and fitting it in with other responsibilities one has toward others.

An example of a violation of this mode of responsibility is the following: Several persons responsible for music in the liturgy prepare and perform all of the music themselves, rather than encourage wider participation, simply because this approach produces an esthetically and technically acceptable result with less trouble. Again, a woman enters into a number of communities--marriage and family, a profession, civic affairs, a church group, a sports association--because of her personal aptitude and interest in each, but does not consider how her quest for personal fulfillment will lead to conflicts of responsibilities in the various groups--conflicts which will cause her to fall short of full cooperation with some or all of those who will be counting on her.

The virtuous disposition which corresponds to this mode of responsibility hardly appears in classical lists of virtues, although this disposition is recognized in our culture today. One aspect of it is sometimes called "team spirit," which involves openness to sharing, to mutual and responsible cooperation, and to the full participation of others who are interested in activities in which one is engaged. The virtue also includes having a carefully integrated set of commitments, so that one is not overcommitted. Words sometimes used for the opposite disposition include "individualism," "having a star complex," and "being overcommitted." It is important to notice that one can violate the present mode of responsibility without actually being unfair to anyone and without being unreasonably attached to the goods one pursues in too individualistic a way. One simply acts in line with nonrational motives which make one overlook or disregard some of the communal possibilities and implications of what one is doing.

Even apart from Christian revelation, divine revelation deepens the foundation for this human mode of responsibility by making known the original community and common vocation of humankind to fill the earth and subdue it, to share the common life of which marriage is the paradigm (cf. Gn 1.26-2.24). The shaping of Israel's life by the covenant made clear the need for coresponsibility among people who would be in friendship with God.

G. The commendation of this mode of responsibility

The notion of obedience is not unitary, but multiple. In one set of cases, it is a duty which members of a constituted community owe to decisions made for the common good. In such cases, one who fails to obey is being unfair. But in another set of cases, the disposition to obey is antecedent to any constituted relationship; it is a docility and submissiveness which is an important part of openness to community. In Scripture, obedience often is commended, and in many instances the disposition is less that of strict dutifulness than that of a ready, cooperative spirit.

By original sin, humankind is isolated from God and enclosed in disobedience (cf. Rom 11.32); this alienation leads to a breakdown in human community symbolized by the dissolution of linguistic communication at Babel (cf. Gn 11.1-9). The beginning of salvation, with Abraham, is marked by his readiness to leave his land (cf. Gn 12.1) and to follow God's command even to the sacrifice of his son, on whose life the fulfillment of the promise depended (cf. Gn 22.1-16). Those who obey God are His servants, and their service can be used as an argument for divine consideration (cf. Dt 9.27). The spirit of service, of readiness to accept responsibility within a framework of cooperation, is perfectly expressed by Samuel's "'Speak, for your servant is listening'" (1 Sam 3.10) and by Mary's "'I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say'" (Lk 1.38).

A clear example of the violation of this mode of responsibility is the situation at Corinth which Paul attempted to correct by his teaching about the unity of the Church as the single body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12). Members of the Church were fascinated with their own gifts. There is no indication they were acting unfairly to one another or violating any other mode of responsibility. But they needed a sense of team-spirit, a disposition to shared responsibility. The situation could be improved only by a spirit of obedience and service which would lead to greater community-consciousness and less individualism.

H. What is the second mode of Christian response?

In the fallen human condition, the apparent impossibility of community makes openness to community seem to be pointless. If one tries to allow for the participation of others, one is likely to find them sluggards, or willing to cooperate only as long as it is in their own interest, or unfaithful to responsibilities they accept. One who strives to share collaboratively in the pursuit of goods is doomed to many disappointments. As I explained in section F, the establishment of the covenant provided an opportunity for an obedient faith, within whose framework this mode of responsibility could to some extent be fulfilled.

However, many nonbelievers are organization people; they seem to fulfill this mode of responsibility. How do they come to show such a disposition? The usual answers are either that they are too lazy to exercise personal initiative or that they find the security and support of others the easiest way to realize most of their own individual interests. These motives for docility are questionable; they are likely to lead people to cooperate in doing things they know to be wrong; at best, they reduce community to an arrangement in which the members make fair use of one another.

The acceptance of salvation through Christ by living faith transforms this situation. By this acceptance, one enters into a genuine fellowship, in which integral human fulfillment is being achieved. Of course, faith demands both energetic, apostolic dedication and a life which is less directed toward one's own satisfaction than it is toward the building up of the mature human person who is Christ in His fulfillment (cf. Eph 4.11-13). One who accepts a place in this fellowship cannot expect to be a well-rounded person, a self-fulfilling individualist, or a superstar. However, one can be confident what one's team-spirit will contribute to the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. One accepts the role of a servant of the body of Christ, and personal fulfillment is found in one's role. Thus the Christian mode of response is: Accept your personal vocation and fulfill it.

The virtuous disposition present in this mode of Christian response is referred to as "Christian dedication." The dedicated person recognizes his or her personal vocation, knows its limits, sees God's will in it, and accepts it with resignation. "Lukewarmness" and "minimalism" are opposed to dedication; those with these dispositions are not ready and willing to put their entire lives at the service of the redemptive work. Such persons also are discontented with their lot in life.

The second beatitude is: "'Blest are the meek; they shall inherit the land'" (Mt 5.4, with "meek" as in most translations substituted for "lowly" of the NAB). The meek are those who lack power; they are docilely submissive to God. The inheritance of the land is the promise of the covenant; this blessing is the fulfillment of God's people as a community. Those who do the service God asks of them will share in the fellowship of the Kingdom in which the promises will be fulfilled superabundantly. To serve Christ is to reign.

In His excoriation of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus utters the woe: "'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you frauds! You shut the doors of the kingdom of God in men's faces, neither entering yourselves nor admitting those who are trying to enter'" (Mt 23.13). They bar the people from their inheritance. If they were meek, they would be dedicated to Christ, but instead they lock the door (the gate Jesus is) and take away the key (the knowledge of Him) (cf. Lk 11.52; Jn 10.9, 14.6). Having some power--because they constitute the establishment--the scribes and Pharisees lack the meekness to serve God in the way that would have been necessary to lead the whole of Israel into the kingdom.

One whose primary love is charity is disposed to divine goodness above all else. God's goodness is real and abundant enough to satisfy everyone; hence, one's efforts to participate in it can be submissive to God's universal, salvific will without any loss or delay to one's personal fulfillment.

According to St. Augustine, the gift of the Holy Spirit which corresponds to the second beatitude is piety or godliness: "Godliness corresponds to the meek, for he who

seeks in a godly frame of mind honors Holy Scripture and does not find fault with what he as yet does not understand, and therefore he does not oppose it--which is to be meek."[6] St. Thomas points out that by piety one has an attitude of filial reverence and dutifulness toward God as Father; he cites St. Paul: "You did not receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear, but a spirit of adoption through which we cry out, 'abba!' (that is, 'Father')" (Rom 8.15).[7] The Christian's submission is filial, not servile.

I. What is most proper to Christian dedication

The beatitude concerning the meek is drawn from the Old Testament. It is a promise that those who follow the Lord and trust in Him will not lose out. They need not be upset with the apparent success of evildoers:

> Give up your anger, and forsake wrath;
> be not vexed, it will only harm you.
> For evildoers shall be cut off,
> but those who wait for the Lord shall possess the land.
> Yet a little while, and the wicked man shall be no more;
> though you mark his place he will not be there.
> But the meek shall possess the land,
> they shall delight in abounding peace (Ps 37.8-11).

In English "meek" connotes a lack of irritability; a hot-tempered person hardly would be called "meek." While this quality is not central to the Scriptural concept, neither is it absent. How does it fit in with Christian dedication?

One who accepts and strives to fulfill his or her personal vocation inevitably encounters much frustration. Frustration naturally causes anger. However, one who is dedicated recognizes that frustration is an essential part of any Christian vocation, and so accepts it with resignation. Resignation--the acceptance of frustration as part of God's will for oneself--is calming. Hence, lack of irritability is an essential, although secondary, element in Christian dedication and meekness.

But what is more central is confidence in God to put right the social wrongs which would arouse vexation and a tendency to violent rebelliousness. This core of meekness is illustrated in a narrative about Moses, who is said to be the meekest man in the world, because he accepts and fulfills the role God assigns him and shows no ego in respect to it (cf. Num 12.1-14).

Meekness is characteristic of Jesus. Although He is sinless, He accepts baptism to fulfill His role perfectly (cf. Mt 3.15). John the Baptist also accepts his limited role in the plan of salvation and is ready to yield prominence to Jesus when the time comes (cf. Mk 1.7; Mt 3.11; Jn 3.27-30). When He enters Jerusalem for the last time, Jesus comes not as the warrior-king, but as a meek leader responding to God's redemptive love (cf. Zec 9.9; Mt 21.4-5).

Most significant is the passage in Matthew's gospel in which Jesus presents Himself as an example:

> "Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest for my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Mt 11.28-30, with "meek" as in most translations substituted for the "gentle" of the NAB).

Those tired of the struggle to do good in a fallen world are promised relief when they join with Jesus and submit to His yoke. It is light because it is accepted without resistance in His dedicated carrying out of the Father's will.

The role of Jesus is one of complete submission to the Father; at the same time it is one of full coresponsibility with Him (cf. Jn 5.19-30). Jesus says nothing on His own; He acts in the role of servant (cf. Jn 12.49, 13.14). Yet in His meekness, He gives Himself the divine name: "'I AM'" (Jn 13.19). Neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit operates autonomously and individualistically (cf. Jn 14.24; 16.13). They work in a perfect communion of love with the Father.

Here is the most proper characteristic of Christian dedication. It goes beyond the obedience of the Old Testament, which in all its nobility still involved an element of servitude. The meekness of the New Testament transcends all servility, for it disposes those who share in divine community: "'You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer speak of you as slaves'" (Jn 15.14-15). Moreover, Christian dedication primarily is to the fulfillment of one's personal vocation, not to the observance of a common and burdensome law, as was the dedication of the pious Jew.[8]

Meekness is commended by name in a number of places in the catechetical instructions contained in the epistles (cf. Gal 5.23; Eph 4.2; Col 3.12; 2 Tm 2.25; Ti 3.2; Jas 1.21, 3.13). More important than these references is the theme of mutual responsibility, love and submission, which runs through the social catechetics (e.g., Eph 5.22-6.9; Col 3.18-4.1; 1 Pt 2.13-3.8). One who has entered into Christ fulfills his or her role with a dedication which precludes an individualistic approach to life.

Most important is a theme which need not be developed here, since it has been unfolded at great length in chapters eleven and twelve. Jesus is the Lamb of God, the suffering servant, who attains fulfillment by His total obedience. Christian life consists in following Him. For each Christian, the mode of response we have been discussing is readiness to accept and to live wholly within the conditions of his or her personal vocation. To carry out one's vocation with dedication means to ignore what else one might have been, to settle with full satisfaction for one's small role in the great drama of salvation, to be willing to act without control over one's own life, to accept frustration with resignation, and to be confident that one is accepting a share in the eternal kingdom.

J. What is the third mode of responsibility?

I take the third beatitude to be that concerning the sorrowing, who are promised

consolation. The third mode of responsibility is the one which corresponds to this.

The third mode is: Do not be moved to act out of any desire for something to which action would not be directed by a deliberate choice made for an intelligible good. One who violates this mode of responsibility acts out of impulse or habit or because of fixation on a particular objective, and thus acts without a reasonable purpose. Such action is at least a waste of time and energy, and it is likely to interfere with the pursuit of intelligible goods. For this reason, one who acts in this way does not proceed consistently with integral human fulfillment, but settles unnecessarily and unreasonably for limited satisfactions.

At times one is aware--or, at least, one could and should be aware--that acting in a certain way does not make sense, since it has no intelligible point to which one can commit oneself. Still, one is moved and sometimes virtually driven to act--for example, by a compulsive desire, by force of habitual routine, or by a particular goal one has accepted. (At times a goal that had been accepted reasonably enough loses its validity yet keeps something of its attraction)

The relevant situation must be distinguished from one in which one naturally and spontaneously does reasonable things without having reasoned about them. It also must be distinguished from cases in which one who has made plans and commitments or has formed habits finds no reason to change his or her mind or to alter the habits, and so continues to act on them. In other words, this mode of responsibility does not rule out spontaneity or demand that one be reflecting rationally at all times on what one is doing.

Examples of the violation of this mode of responsibility are the following. A person sees no point in having another drink or smoking or eating a rich dessert or spending an evening in idle talk but feels an urge to do such things and does them to satisfy the urge, although he or she otherwise would not deliberately choose so to act. Again, people become accustomed to using certain brands of products and continue to use them out of habit even when other brands which would serve as well become more economical. Again, people want wealth and many fine possessions, and they work hard to gain these goals, yet success often serves no basic human good and engenders little or no satisfaction.

The virtuous disposition which corresponds to this mode of responsibility most appropriately is called "self control," for one who violates it is not in control of his or her own acts, but is a slave of a nonrational motive. Self control includes at least some aspects of many virtues, such as temperance, chastity, modesty, and simplicity of life. Self control also can be called "discipline" if this word is used to signify a virtuous disposition rather than an imposed regimen. The vice opposed to self control includes at least certain aspects of lustfulness, gluttony, greed, wastefulness, fanaticism, jealousy, envy, short sightedness, impetuosity, and many other bad dispositions.

Even apart from Christian revelation, divine revelation deepens the foundation for this human mode of responsibility by providing the model of God's holiness, by making human persons know their own dignity as beings made in God's image, and especially by clarifying the conception of free choice and moral responsibility. The life proposed by the Jewish law also demanded and thus cultivated self-discipline.

K. Some Scriptural indications of this mode of responsibility

Scripture is filled with condemnations of vicious dispositions which more or less clearly pertain to this mode of responsibility, but in many cases one cannot be sure that the irrational lack of self control is the precise evil in view.

However, certain chapters of the wisdom literature seem to be concerned with this mode of responsibility, for they gather the criticism of many relevant vices and treat them as forms of foolishness. For example, one chapter in Proverbs criticizes desiring delicacies, striving to be rich, wasting time with foolish people, neglect of discipline of the young, drinking wine, consorting with prostitutes and adulterous women (cf. Prv 23). Ecclesiastes contains two passages (2.1-12; 5.9-6.12) in which the vanity of pleasure and riches is underlined; the precise point of these passages is that desire for such things leads to no true human good.

Sirach specifically commends self control: "He who keeps the law controls his impulses" (Sir 21.11) and includes a passage which begins: "Go not after your lusts, but keep your desires in check," (Sir 18.30) and proceeds to condemn satisfaction of lustful desires, momentary pleasure, wine-bibbing, gluttony, harlotry, and useless talk (cf. Sir 18.31-19.11). Other passages point out the uselessness of pursuing riches and the self-punishing character of miserliness (cf. Sir 31.1-7; 14.3-10). Again, the self-destructiveness of indulgence in goods is stressed (cf. Sir 37.26-30).

St. Paul takes up an important idea from the wisdom literature, that sin and idolatry are at the bottom of a foolishly dissolute life. The pagans were able to know God yet they did not glorify and thank Him, so their pretense of wisdom ended in foolishness. They practiced idolatry, and: "In consequence, God delivered them up in their lusts to unclean practices; they engaged in the mutual degradation of their bodies" (Rom 1.24).

He instructs Christians to be different: "The night is far spent; the day draws near. Let us cast off the deeds of darkness. . .. Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the desires of the flesh" (Rom 13.12, 14). That Christians must put aside fleshly desires is a standard element of New Testament catechesis (cf. 2 Cor 7.1; 1 Thess 4.1-5; Jas 1.21; 1 Pt 2.11). John teaches that what the world offers is not from the Father: "Carnal allurements, enticements for the eye, the life of empty show--all these are from the world. And the world with its seductions is passing away" (1 Jn 2.16-17).

L. What is the third mode of Christian response?

In the fallen human condition, the universality of vanity conceals the specific vanity of acting out of motives which one realizes to be nonrational. When degradation is universal one might as well do what is degrading. Death is an awesome reality; one might as well live for the moment or gain what satisfaction one can in pursuing particular objectives, even if their attainment will be empty of meaning. If the dead are not

raised, eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die (cf. 1 Cor 15.32). As I explained in section J, the revelation of the Old Testament provided some help in overcoming this attitude; moreover, by the time of Jesus, many pious Jews believed in the resurrection to come (and many still do today).

However, many nonbelievers are quite self-disciplined. How do they manage to develop such a disposition? The answer is that the self-control of the nonbeliever usually is in the service of one major nonrational motive which is thoroughly rationalized so that its true character is not obvious. For example, many hard-working and tightly controlled people are bent on achieving fame and reputation. These goals, when considered reflectively, clearly are of value neither to the one who attains them nor to anyone else. To some extent, nonbelievers avoid nonrational action out of prudential motives; people avoid excess, follow a healthful regimen, and lead generally orderly lives because they are afraid of the consequences of not doing so.

The light of faith transforms one's view of this present life. One who accepts Christ with living faith now has a real purpose in life, and this purpose is adequate to organize the whole of life. In it, integral human fulfillment can be found. Therefore, one should put aside everything else. Not only behavior which has been indulged in without any rational motive but even behavior which could have a rational motive but which has no role in one's personal vocation must be put aside as irrational. Thus the Christian mode of response is: Put aside and avoid everything which is not necessary or useful in the fulfillment of your personal vocation.

The virtuous disposition present in this mode of Christian response is referred to as "detachment." Habitual self-denial is an aspect of such detachment. The following of the counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience is an important means of detachment. "Worldliness" and "anxiety" frequently signify opposed dispositions. One who follows nonrational motives is enslaved; the fruit of detachment is an important aspect of the liberty of the children of God, as St. Paul makes explicit (cf. Gal 5.13-24).

The third beatitude is: "Blest too are the sorrowing; they shall be consoled." The sorrowing certainly include those who are contrite, but the concept very often has been taken far more widely, to embrace the Christian's entire attitude toward this present world.[9] As St. Augustine writes concerning this beatitude:

> Mourning is sadness for the loss of dear ones [or things]. But when people turn to God, they dismiss what they cherished as dear in this world; for they do not find joy in those things which before rejoiced them; and until there comes about in them the love for what is eternal, they feel the sting of sadness over a number of things. They, therefore, will be comforted by the Holy Spirit, who especially for this reason is named the Paraclete, that is, the Consoler, that disregarding the temporal they may enjoy eternal happiness.[10]

In this world, the follower of Christ is a stranger and a pilgrim, and the world is passing away. Together with rejoicing in hope of fulfillment in Christ, the Christian mourns the dying world which must be cast aside.

In His excoriation of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus condemns their avarice and impurity: "'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you frauds! You cleanse the outside of cup and dish, and leave the inside filled with loot and lust'" (Mt 23.25). In Luke, a similar woe is complemented by an explicit call for detachment: "'But if you give what you have as alms, all will be wiped clean for you'" (Lk 11.40).

One whose primary love is charity has a heart which is at rest in God, and so needs nothing else for satisfaction. Disposed to goodness itself, one is freed from the pursuit of particular goals which are vain and pointless.

According to St. Augustine, the gift of the Holy Spirit which corresponds to the third beatitude is knowledge. One learns the true nature of the things one had considered good; Christian liberation gives a genuine insight into values in the light of the Gospel.[11] St. Thomas teaches that by this gift one is enlightened both to discern what belongs to faith and to judge earthly things in the light of faith, thus to know where one's true good lies and how everything else in life is related to it as secondary or unimportant.[12]

M. What is most proper to Christian detachment

One might argue that the virtue of detachment in itself, simply as such, is properly Christian. While a certain asceticism is commended in the Old Testament, the promises initially were of this-worldly goods. Moderation and self-control were strongly taught, as I explained in section K, but only in the New Testament can one find the conception that the kingdom is not of this world, that the Messiah is the Suffering Servant, virtually without any fulfillment in this life. Christian otherworldliness provides a new ground for discipline: "Beloved, you are strangers and in exile; hence I urge you not to indulge your carnal desires" (1 Pt 2.11).

The detachment Jesus teaches is radical. If one's eye or hand offends, one is to detach oneself from it (cf. Mt 5.27-30). One is to be entirely carefree, with no concern even about the necessities of life, since God will provide what is truly necessary (cf. Mt 6.25-34). Seek the kingdom and everything else will follow:

> "Do not live in fear, little flock. It has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms. Get purses for yourselves that do not wear out, a never-failing treasure with the Lord which no thief comes near nor any moth destroys. Wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be" (Lk 12.32-34).

The worldly rich man is a fool; his soul will be required of him, and he cannot take with him the goods he has accumulated (cf. Lk 12.16-21).

Jesus teaches that one must be detached from everything, including life itself (cf. Mt 10.28; Lk 12.4-6). His own death is a necessary condition for His resurrection, and so He gladly lays down His life (cf. Jn 12.25). Paul drives the lesson of detachment home with respect to everything one does in this world; from the use of marriage to the use of the world's goods one must proceed as if one were not even involved with these things: "for the world as we know it is passing away. I should like you to be free of all worries" (1 Cor 7.31-32).

Here is what is most characteristic of Christian detachment. It is not so much a negative attitude as a disposition of liberty to live without impediments toward heaven. Jesus tells the rich young man, who has kept the commandments, to sell all he has and to come and follow Jesus Himself. And He goes on to explain that riches are a burden and an obstacle (cf. Mk 10.17-27; Mt 19.16-26; Lk 18.18-27). The apostles had given up their lives and possessions to follow Jesus; he tells them their reward will be great not only in heaven but even in this world (cf. Mk 10.28-31; Mt 19.27-30; Lk 18.28-30). Mark significantly includes persecutions among the goods which they will receive in this world to compensate them for their detachment (Mk 10.30).

How is Christian life so rewarding in this world, and how are persecutions a good to be prized? The answer obviously is that Christian detachment is liberation to follow Jesus. One receives back more because one's life as a member of the Church is enriched with all the wealth of family and goods of the Church as a whole. For instance, a celibate priest is not without children; he has hundreds of them. He is not without a home; he is welcome in hundreds of them. What he does not have is exclusive possession and the kinds of uses which lead to moral and spiritual trouble. But this lack is no loss (cf. PO 15-17).

The capital text on detachment is that concerning taking up one's cross; in Matthew and Mark it is preceded immediately by Jesus' first prediction of His passion and death and His reproof to Peter, who had human standards, not God's. Then Jesus insists on the necessity for self-denial to follow Him and the uselessness of gaining the whole world if one loses one's soul in the process. Moreover, He promises the heavenly reward to those who follow Him (cf. Mk 8.31-39; Mt 16.21-28; Lk 9.22-27).

N. What is the fourth mode of responsibility?

The fourth mode of responsibility corresponds to the fourth beatitude, which concerns those who hunger and thirst for righteousness--that is, for the holiness which comes from God's redeeming and justifying love.

The fourth mode is: Do not be deterred by any fear from acting in the way which would be determined (or has been determined) by a deliberate choice of an intelligible good. One violates this mode of responsibility when one fails to act or desists from acting or alters one's course of action because of mere feelings of repugnance, fear of pain or other sensible evils, or concern about obstacles which do not involve an intelligible evil. To submit to such limiting factors is to restrict one's pursuit of intelligible goods without reason. Therefore, one who is restrained by such factors does not proceed consistently with integral human fulfillment, but settles for unnecessary limitations on fulfillment.

At times one is aware--or, at least, can and should be aware--that acting in a certain way makes good sense, since it has an intelligible point to which one can direct one's action (and perhaps serves a good to which one already has committed oneself). Still, one is held back (or even driven to act in a contrary way) by negative feelings such as repugnance for what is disgusting, squeamishness, fear of pain, anxiety about possible obstacles (which often are not serious or are even unreal), and so on.

The relevant situation must be distinguished from one in which a person naturally and spontaneously avoids real dangers and evils which it is reasonable to avoid, although without rational reflection and choice. It especially must be distinguished from cases in which one avoids allowing or bringing about bad consequences in virtue of a concern about fairness, in fulfillment of some duty, or out of unwillingness to do evil that good might come of it. In other words, this mode of responsibility does not rule out spontaneity in avoiding bad experiences, nor does it demand that one be prepared to do everything necessary to bring about intelligible goods.

Examples of the violation of this mode of responsibility are the following. A priest finds that visiting a nursing home is unpleasant; the attendants are disagreeable, the patients are smelly and irritable, and he seldom seems to accomplish much during the hours he spends there. Hence, he visits the place less often than he first reasonably planned to do. Again, a woman suspects that she has a lump in her breast which might be cancerous, but she is afraid of the pain and mutilation of surgery, and so she puts off getting an examination. Again, students are anxious about a difficult course, so they put off as long as possible studying the materials required in it. Again, someone realizes that he or she should undertake an important but very difficult task in which failure is likely, but decides not to undertake the task in order to avoid the probable frustration and disappointment.

The virtuous disposition which corresponds to this mode of responsibility is signified by at least many uses of words such as "courage," "mettle," "fortitude," "resolution," "tenacity," "determination," "backbone," "perseverance," and "guts." The vice opposed to this virtue is signified by many uses of expressions such as "cowardice," "squeamishness," "irresolution," "being a quitter," "being a worrywart," and so forth.

Even apart from Christian revelation, divine revelation deepens the foundation for this human mode of responsibility by providing the model of God's faithfulness, by making clear the limited reality and nonultimacy of evil, inasmuch as it is a privation and not a positive power (like an anti-god), and by providing assurance that God supports and rescues His people. The love of fellow Israelites demanded by Jewish law also formed social solidarity and thus provided mutual support, which fosters courage.

O. Some Scriptural indications of this mode of responsibility

Frequently throughout the Old Testament, the importance of courage in warfare is underlined. The fearful and fainthearted are excluded from the army, although sometimes this exclusion results in a drastic reduction in force (cf. Dt 20.8; Jgs 7.3). The whole book of Judith is a marvelous story of courage; it illustrates both of the bases of the virtue in the Old Testament, namely, confidence in God and reverential fear of Him (cf. Jdt 8.9-33). Her example was especially striking, since, as in many cultures, courage in the face of death was regarded as an especially masculine virtue (cf. 1 Sm 4.9; 2 Mc 7.21).

In the Second Book of Maccabees are several fine accounts of heroic courage in the face of death under persecution rather than in war. Eleazar accepts death to avoid giving bad example, although he might have saved himself by pretending to meet the demand of the persecutors without really doing so; he leaves a marvelous example of courage not only for the young but for everyone (cf. 2 Mc 6.18-31). The mother and her seven sons undergo torture and death rather than violate the dietary law forbidding the eating of pork (cf. Mc 7). Razis commits suicide in an especially gruesome way rather than surrender--an act morally indefensible but literally illustrative of guts (cf. Mc 14.37-46).

Because confidence in God is the chief basis of courage, fearfulness is a sign of defect in faith and trust in God's faithfulness. Knowledge and experience are valuable in dangerous situations, but steady confidence is primarily based upon hope (cf. Sir 34.9-17). For this reason, the entire story of faith and hope throughout the Old Testament is essentially also a story of courage. Abraham, for example, leaves his home for the promised land, not knowing where he is going, lives under adverse conditions, and is ready to sacrifice the one who is the bearer of the promise--all because of his unshakeable confidence in God (cf. Heb 11.8-11, 17-19).

Jesus teaches reverential fear of God as an antidote to fear of those who can do no more than kill the body (cf. Mt. 10.28; Lk 12.4-6). Fear is useless; what is needed is trust, which instills courage (cf. Mk 5.36; Mt 9.22; Lk 8.50). During Jesus' earthly life, the apostles often show their lack of courage, which manifests the inadequacy of their faith (cf. Mk 4.40; Mt 8.26; Lk 8.25). After Pentecost, their faith was firm and they proclaimed the Gospel boldly (cf. Acts 2.4, 23).

The exhortation to faithfulness is a constant of New Testament catechetics (2 Thess 2.15; Gal 5.1; Phil 4.1; Col 1.23; 1 Cor 15.58; Heb 12.12; Jas 4.8). The Christian must stand firm in faith and with patient endurance wait in hope for the coming of Christ. Christian warfare is not against flesh and blood; those engaged in it need spiritual armor to hold fast on the evil day, to do their duty, to hold their ground (cf. Eph 6.10-17).

P. What is the fourth mode of Christian response?

In the fallen human condition, evil and suffering are prevalent; fear becomes the predominant motive in human life. The great masses of people struggle for survival, driven to action and kept in check by terror of pain, suffering, and death. Lesser fears, with few exceptions, are controlled by greater ones. Fear of death is the greatest of all. It is for this reason that courage in the face of death almost universally is regarded as an exceptional and excellent quality. As I explained in section N, the revelation of the Old Testament provided considerable help in overcoming this attitude. Sheer terror gives way to reverential fear of God and faith in Him. Courage develops into the magnificent faithfulness of the Old Testament martyrs and the heroic fidelity of many other holy persons, especially several of the great prophets.

However, many nonbelievers seem to have considerable courage. How do they manage to develop this disposition? Generally by a false estimation of the significance of evil, especially of the evil of death, which by reflection neutralizes normal reactions. For example, the value and personal quality of bodily life itself often is downgraded to make death seem insignificant. Either a better, disembodied, and perhaps nonpersonal existence is expected after this life or permanent escape into darkness is accepted as an escape from misery. Some nonbelievers also manifest courage out of excessive commitment--for instance, out of fanatical dedication to a cause or out of love of honor. Small boys find it hard to resist a dare.

The light of faith transforms one's understanding of evil and of human hopes to overcome it. One who accepts Christ with living faith does not diminish the value of human goods threatened by evil and does not distort the reality and seriousness of evil in order to make it more bearable. Like the Jew, the Christian instead trusts in God. Courage becomes a function of faithfulness, for the faithfulness of God guarantees salvation, while the faithfulness of the believer demands that no repugnance, suffering, or obstacle be allowed to lead to violation of the basic commitment which forms the whole of one's life. Belief that Christ already has won the victory and awareness that one's fidelity is essential to bear witness to faith in Christ transform courage into Christian faithfulness. Thus the Christian mode of response is: Willingly endure everything which is necessary or useful for the fulfillment of your personal vocation.

The virtuous disposition present in this mode of Christian response is the faithfulness and heroism which is characteristic of the martyr. This virtue is required of every Christian, who must be ready at any time to suffer martyrdom if that is necessary. Patient endurance of lesser evils and sufferings is an important aspect of Christian faithfulness. Opposed to this disposition are weakness of faith, softness, anxious nervousness, reticence about one's faith and embarrassment about practicing it, and so on.

The fourth beatitude is: "'Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill'" (Mt 5.6).[13] Jesus gives living water; His own food is doing God's will (cf. Jn 4.14, 34). "'I myself am the bread of life. No one who comes to me shall ever be hungry, no one who believes in me shall ever thirst'" (Jn 6.35). The condition which must be met for permanent satisfaction of the most urgent human appetites--these on which survival itself depends--is faith in Jesus. One who has these appetites will hardly notice obstacles to their satisfaction. The appetite for holiness is met now by the Eucharist and forever by the union with God which the Eucharist gives (cf. Jn 6.53-58). Having transformed water into wine at Cana, Jesus finishes His redemptive work by transforming the bitter wine of human suffering into the blood and water of saving grace (cf. Jn 2.4, 19.28, 30, 34).

In his excoriation of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus condemns their false resoluteness: "'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you frauds! You travel over sea and land to make a single convert, but once he is converted you make a devil of him twice as wicked as yourselves'" (Mt 22.15). No doubt, the acceptance of the difficulties and risks of such work would have appeared to be real faithfulness, but Jesus points out the valuelessness of misdirected commitment, even when it is not self-seeking.

One whose primary love is charity has a disposition to a complete and enduring good which no evil can touch, and thus has nothing whatsoever to fear: "Love has no room for fear; rather, perfect love casts out all fear" (1 Jn 4.18), even including fear of punishment. One who abides in God has absolute confidence; even childlike fear gives way to a reverent boldness.

According to Augustine, the gift of the Holy Spirit which corresponds to this beatitude is fortitude. Those who hunger and thirst work in the desire for the joy which comes from what is truly and eternally good.[14] St. Thomas points out that by this gift, the Christian not only does upright things, but lives with an insatiable desire, which is suggested by "hunger" and "thirst."[15]

Q. What is most proper to Christian faithfulness

As I explained in section Q, the Old Testament already saw a considerable development of the virtue of faithfulness. Much of what is contained in the New Testament does not, in any explicit way, add anything to this heritage. For example, the great eschatological discourse (cf. Mk 13; Mt 24-25; Lk 21.5-36) clearly is written to encourage faithfulness in time of trouble and persecution; present suffering means that God's sure help will soon arrive. But this discourse contains nothing on the required response which one might not have known from the Old Testament. Similarly, in his chapter on love, Paul notes in the area of faithfulness the power to trust, to hope, and to endure (cf. 1 Cor 13.7)--all fully illustrated in the Old Testament.

Most distinctive of Christian faithfulness is that it is fidelity to Christ and His Church. From this comes firmness based on the conviction that the only real evil to be feared already has been destroyed:

"I tell you all this that in me you may find peace.
You will suffer in the world.
But take courage! I have overcome the world" (Jn 16.33).

This assurance should exclude all concern from Christian hearts; instead, they are to be filled with joy and peace (cf. Jn 14.1, 27-31). In persecution, their assurance is that they cooperate with the Holy Spirit in bearing witness to an already triumphant Lord (cf. Jn 15.18-16.4). The resurrection quickly confirms the promise, brings peace, and grounds faith (cf. Jn 20.19-29). The result is effected not by the mere fact of the resurrection --which induces only terror (cf. Mk 15.6-8)--but by the living presence of Jesus and the confirming gift of the Spirit (cf. Lk 24.36-49).

It follows that Christian faithfulness is not mere courage, not true grit. Suffering for the sake of future joy belongs to faithfulness as such (cf. Kn 16.21-22; Heb 12.2). But for the Christian suffering must be accepted with present joy, since it unites one with Christ (cf. Rom 5.3; Col 1.24; Jas 1.2; 1 Pt 1.6).

Finally, because of the importance of personal vocation in Christian life, faithfulness for the Christian demands not only endurance but an active effort. One must put Christ's teaching into practice, building upon the solid foundation of charity (cf. Mt 7.15-27). Good fruit is required; united with Christ one will bear it abundantly (cf. Jn 15.1-8). Hence, Christian faithfulness demands creativity by which one is able to do not only works like those of Jesus, but works even greater than His (cf. Jn 14.12), works which with faithful initiative build Christ to His full stature and complete what remains of His sufferings (cf. Eph 4.13; Col 1.24).

Because of the positive aspects of both detachment and faithfulness, the two dispositions virtually merge into one. The Christian must be utterly carefree, without the concerns which arise from attachment to mutable goods, with joy in suffering which arises from even this being a way of sharing here and now in everlasting fulfillment. Hence, the law of the cross links self-denial and the taking up of one's cross in the fulfillment of each Christian's personal vocation: "'If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps. Whoever would preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will preserve it'" (Mk 8.34-35).

Notes to chapter twenty

1. See Jacques Dupont, Les Béatitudes, tome III, Les Évangélistes, 2nd ed. (Paris: J. Gabalda et cie, ed., 1973), pp. 399-411, 458-471.
2. See St. Augustine, The Lord's Sermon on the Mount, trans. John J. Jepson, S.S. (New York, Ramsey: Newman Press, 1948), p. 19.
3. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, 2-2, qu. 19, art. 9.
4. See John L. McKenzie, S.J., Dictionary of the Bible (New York and London: Macmillan and Collier Macmillan, 1965), pp. 681-684.
5. See Dupont, op. cit., pp. 473-545.
6. St. Augustine, loc. cit.
7. St. Thomas Aquinas, op. cit., qu. 121, art. 1.
8. Fred L. Fisher, The Sermon on the Mount (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1976), p. 31, illustrates meekness with the example of the discipline of football players, each of whom docilely obeys signals. The Christian who is meek accepts the position he or she is given in Christ's kingdom on earth, and follows the signals of Jesus in playing this position to the fullest possible extent.
9. See Dupont, op. cit., pp. 545-555.
10. St. Augustine, op. cit., p. 14.
11. Ibid., p. 19.
12. St. Thomas Aquinas, op. cit., qu. 9, art. 4.
13. See Dupont, op. cit., pp. 355-384.
14. St. Augustine, loc. cit.
15. St. Thomas Aquinas, op. cit., qu. 139, art. 2.