

**GOD'S GRACIOUS GASH:**  
Does it Matter? It Must!

**HAVE YOU EVER BEEN PERSECUT-  
ED** because you held fast to the love and mercy of the Gospel? Really, have you? Were you ever isolated, sneered at, maybe mocked because you advocated for something, for someone because of what you believe and know as a Christian to be right and just? I'm not sure I have. But, if you have, then it would appear that you are among the blessed!

The last of the Beatitudes gets bogged down by the word "righteousness." It's a

churchy words that most of us don't use very often, or we get it confused with being self-righteous, a behavior that calls more attention to ourselves and so is discouraged. Righteousness demands something from us, but it is not about us.

When Jesus speaks of those "who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness," he is simply speaking of those who do what is right, who stand for what is just, who hold to what is true even when, especially when, others resist acceptance.

Pope Francis, as he concluded his series of Angelus homilies on this passage from the Sermon on the Mount last spring, explained that the final Beatitude is an integral result of the ones preceding it. It's all one road winding its way to this destination.

"The poor in spirit, those who

mourn, those who are meek, those who thirst for holiness, those who are merciful, those who are pure in heart and those who are peacemakers might experience persecution for Christ's sake," the Holy Father explained. "But in the end, this persecution is a cause of joy, of

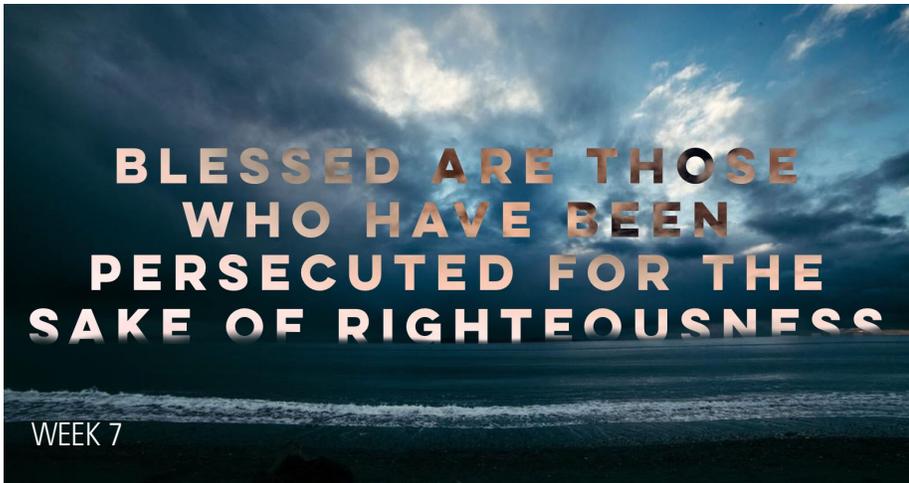
said. "They experience it as a reproach. When sanctity and a life lived as children of God come to the fore, in that beauty which is uncomfortable because it begs that a position be taken: either one allows oneself to be open to the question and to the good or one rejects the light and hardens one's heart, even to the point of opposition and hounding."

Let's give Pope Francis the last word, "We must be faithful to the humble path of the Beatitudes, because it leads to being of Christ and not of the world.

"Exclusion and persecution, if God grants us that grace, make us resemble Christ Crucified and, associating us with His passion, are the manifestation of new life. This life is the same as Christ's, who for us and for our salvation was 'despised and rejected.'

"Refusing compromises and taking the path of Jesus Christ is the life of the Kingdom of heaven, the greatest joy, true joy. And then, in persecutions, there is always the presence of Jesus who accompanies us, the presence of Jesus who consoles us, and the strength of the Holy Spirit who helps us to go ahead. Let us not be discouraged when a life consistent with the Gospel attracts the persecution of the people: there is the Spirit who sustains us on this road."

**TL**



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great recompense in heaven. The path of the Beatitudes is one of a Paschal journey that leads from a life according to the world to one that is of God; from an existence guided by the flesh, that is, by selfishness, to one guided by the Spirit."

Too often, Pope Francis observed, disciples who are committed to following the teaching of Jesus become "a nuisance." If we are true to ourselves and to Jesus, we will take positions others oppose, we will stand with people others want to reject or ignore, we will challenge norms that would be so much easier to pretend didn't exist. We will be a nuisance.

"This word 'nuisance' is the key, because Christian witness alone, which does so much good for many people because they follow it, is a nuisance to those who have a worldly mentality," he