

Try practicing Beatitudes

Mary Jo Pedersen/CNS

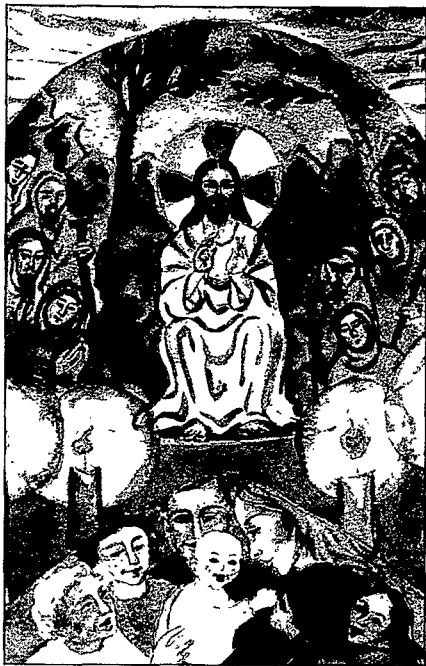
Is there any way to put the Beatitudes into practice at home this Christmas season? I have five suggestions.

1. Encourage poverty of spirit by keeping the focus on giving instead of getting.

Toss out the catalogues that create unrealistic expectations — or limit how many your family is allowed to see. Suggest that family members give gifts that don't cost a lot of money, maybe a coupon for shoveling the walk or a dozen muffins delivered whenever the receiver requests. An hour's worth of labor that can be cashed in when needed is a great gift. As a gift for aged people, the promise of a visit per week or per month is worth a pile of do-dads.

2. During Christmastime, make a special effort to be in solidarity with those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

One practical way to do this is to cut out newspaper or magazine pictures of families in refugee camps, migrant workers, recent immigrants and others who do not have the benefit of such basics as shelter, food, health care or safety. Place the pictures in a prominent place (refrigerator, prayer space, bathroom mirror) and pray daily for these people. Join community efforts to alle-



viate poverty and injustice. Consult your parish staff or the local Catholic Charities office for ideas.

3. Be a peacemaker by resisting the culture's preoccupation with violence in movies, music and games.

Consider refusing to buy violent and aggressive Christmas toys for children or adults. Bring about peace in your personal relationships at home and in the workplace. One step is to write a Christmas note to an estranged friend or relative. Ex-

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tend a peaceful hand to those who are rude or unfair to you. Apologize to those you have hurt; do it without expectations.

4. Seek righteousness if you want to be satisfied this Christmas.

Christianity teaches that nothing on earth ever will satisfy us or make us completely happy. Only those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied. Hungering for the perfect purchased gift is surely futile.

5. Christmas is a time for purity of heart.

The pure of heart try to keep their priorities straight. Their "to do" list looks different at Christmas. It includes daily prayer. It lists clearing some of the clutter of life away to focus on how to bring Christ's presence to others in simple ways such as visiting the sick and lonely, comforting those who are grieving or lending a helping hand to neighbors.

The Beatitudes are the secret to a truly joyful and happy holiday season.

Pedersen is coordinator of the Leadership in Family Life Training Program for the Archdiocese of Omaha, Neb.

DISCUSSION POINT:

Tell of a concrete way a Christian can serve this Christmas as a much-needed peacemaker.

Selected reader responses:

"Christmas ... is actually a very lonely time for a lot of people. I try to be aware and sensitive to those who are alone — something as simple as joining someone who usually sits alone in the pew during Mass." — **Kelly Schmidt, Portland, Ore.**

"I will try to treat the person directly in front of me with respect and kindness and really try to consider what life is like lived in the shoes of the other. This ... should happen not just in our house, but in traffic, in the checkout line and in the wide world." — **Jeannie Fleming, Bethany Beach, Del.**

"[I am] principal of St. Ambrose Elementary ... One focus of our religion program is service. Learning to serve others with a happy heart leads to respect, which leads to a more peaceful environment for all. ... The children ... will perform many acts of service this year. During the Christmas season we pick angels [each one requests a gift for someone in need] from the giving tree in our church and purchase Christmas gifts for them." — **Laura Kazmierczak, Buffalo, N.Y.**

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Christmas Masses:
 12/24 - 5 pm Family Mass; 10:30 pm Choral Music, 11 pm Mass
 12/25 - 10 a.m.
 Sundays: 8 am, 10 am, 12:15 pm
 Mon., Wed., Fri. 8 am; Tues. 7:00 pm; Thurs. 5:30 pm
BLESSED SACRAMENT CHURCH
 534 Oxford St., Rochester NY 14607

Create a New Ritual

This holiday season light four candles in honor and celebration of your loved one. The four candles represent your grief, your courage, your memories and your love. During this season of new hope, may you find peace and joy in remembering.

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You are cordially invited to attend

Midnight Mass

at

SAINT ANNE CHURCH

1600 Mount Hope Avenue • Rochester, New York

Wednesday, 24 December 2003

11:30 PM Carols
 11:55 PM Christmas Proclamation
 12:00 AM Solemn Mass at Midnight

Choral Music by Palestrina, Bach, Haydn, Langlais, Duruflé, Near Plainsong • Anglican Chant
 Organ Music by Searle Wright, C.-M. Widor, Jehan Alain and others

The Adult Choir of Saint Anne Church
 Daniel Brondel, Director • Stephen Fraser, Organist

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