



# The Holy See

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POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 19 February 2020 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

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*Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning,*

In today's catechesis we consider the third of the eight Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew: "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*" (Mt 5:5).

Here, the term "meek", literally means sweet, docile, gentle, devoid of violence. Meekness manifests itself in times of conflict. It can be seen by how one reacts to a hostile situation. Anyone can appear meek when everything is peaceful, but how does one react "under pressure", if one is under attack, offended, threatened?

In one passage, Saint Paul refers to "the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor 10:1). Meanwhile, Saint Peter recalls the attitude of Jesus during his Passion: he did not respond nor threaten because "he trusted to him who judges justly" (1 Pt 2:23). And the meekness of Jesus can be clearly seen in his Passion.

In Scripture, the word "meek" also indicates one who does not have earthly property. Thus, we are struck by the fact that the third Beatitude says precisely that the meek "shall inherit the earth".

In reality, this Beatitude quotes Psalm 37 which we heard at the beginning of the catechesis. There too, meekness and earthly possessions are juxtaposed. If one thinks about it, these two things appear to be incompatible. Indeed the possession of land is a typical setting for conflict: people often fight over a territory in order to dominate a particular area. The stronger one prevails in war and conquers other lands.

But let us look more closely at the verb that is used to indicate the possessions of the meek: they do not conquer the earth. It does not say "Blessed the meek for they shall conquer the earth". They "*inherit it*". Blessed are the meek, for they shall "inherit" the earth. In the Scriptures the verb "inherit" has a much deeper meaning. The People of God actually refer to the land of Israel which

is the Land of the Promise, as their “inheritance”.

That land is a promise and a gift to the People of God and it becomes the symbol for something much greater than a simple territory. There is a “land” — allow me to play on words — which is Heaven, that is the land towards which we are journeying: the new heavens and the new earth towards which we are going (cf. Is 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pt 3:13; Ap 21:1).

Therefore the meek are those who “inherit” the most sublime of territories. They are not cowards, “weak” people who find a moral expedient to avoid difficulties. Quite the contrary! They are people who have received an inheritance and do not wish to squander it. The meek are not accommodating, but rather they are Christ’s disciples who have learned how to protect quite another earth. They protect their peace. They protect their relationship with God and they protect his gifts, God’s gifts, preserving mercy, fraternity, trust, hope, because meek people are merciful, fraternal, trusting people with hope.

Here we have to mention the sin of “anger”, a violent surge whose impulse we all understand. Who has not been angry at some point? Everyone [has]. We have to reconsider this Beatitude and ask ourselves a question: how many things have we destroyed in anger? How many things have we lost? A moment of anger can destroy many things. One loses control and does not value what is truly important. And one can ruin a relationship with a brother or sister, sometimes beyond any remedy. Many brothers or sisters no longer speak to each other because of anger. They distance themselves from each other. It is the opposite of meekness. Meekness brings people together. Anger separates.

Meekness can conquer many things. Meekness is capable of winning over hearts, saving friendships and many other things besides. People become angry, but then they calm down, they think it over and retrace their steps. In this way, one can rebuild with meekness.

“The “earth” to be conquered with meekness is the salvation of that brother whom the Gospel of Matthew mentions: “If he listens to you, you have gained your brother” (Mt 18:15). There is no earth more beautiful than the heart of others. There is no finer territory to attain than that of the peace found again with a brother or sister. And this is the earth to be inherited through meekness!

### ***Special Greetings***

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially the groups from England, Norway, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and the United States of America. Upon all of you and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!

Lastly, I greet young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds. Trust in the Lord and make an effort to enter into his plans, accepting that his salvation can reach us through ways that may be different from what we might expect.