

## Precepts of the Church

The *Precepts of the Catholic Church* are a description of the **absolute minimum** actions required of Catholics regarding the Church.

The Church uses these precepts remind us that Christian life requires a commitment to prayer and active participation in the liturgy and sacraments. If we fall below this bare-minimum level, we can't rightly consider ourselves to be in full communion with the Catholic Church.

Each of these precepts of the Catholic Church is a requirement. Together with the Ten Commandments, they represent the minimum level of moral living. Intentional violation of the precepts or the Commandments is a *grave matter*, meaning a mortal sin.

## The Precepts

### 1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.

We must keep holy the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord (Sunday), as well as the principal feast days, known as Catholic holy days of obligation. This requires attending Mass, and by resting from unnecessary work in order to give ourselves the opportunity to relax with God to recuperate both body and soul that we may better serve our Lord.

### 2. You shall confess your sins at least once a year.

We must prepare for the Eucharist by means of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). This sacrament continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness.

### 3. You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.

This guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy.

### 4. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.

The fourth precept ensures the times of self-discipline and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire control over our instincts and freedom of heart.

### 5. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

The fifth precept means that the faithful are obliged to help with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability.

Note that these precepts of the Catholic Church are required, **unless** you have a legitimate reason for not meeting them. For example:

- If you are sick, tending to a sick child, or camping in the wilderness on Sunday and cannot get to Mass, it is not a grave violation to miss Mass that day.
- Children, the elderly, and pregnant or nursing women do not have to fast on normal fast days (Ash Wednesday and Good Friday).

## **Fasting and Abstinence**

### **Abstinence:**

The law of abstinence from meat and foods made with meat is to be observed on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all Friday's during Lent. Meat is considered to be flesh or organs of mammals and fowl. Fish, amphibians, reptiles and shellfish are permitted. **All** Catholics 14 years of age and older should abstain from eating meat on the above mentioned days. If health reasons prevent abstinence from meat, sacrifice of another kind should be made on those days.

### **Fasting:**

The law of fasting requires a Catholic from the 18th to the 59th birthday to reduce the amount of food eaten from normal. The Church defines this as one meal a day, and two smaller meals which if added together would not exceed the main meal in quantity. Such fasting is required on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The fast is broken by eating between meals and by drinks which could be considered food (milk shakes, but not milk). Alcoholic beverages do not break the fast; however, they seem to be contrary to the spirit of doing penance.

Besides those outside the age limits, those of unsound mind, the sick, the frail, pregnant or nursing women according to need for meat or nourishment, manual laborers according to need, guests at a meal who cannot excuse themselves without giving great offense or causing enmity and other situations of moral or physical impossibility to observe the penitential discipline are excused from the requirements of fasting and abstinence.

## **The Liturgical Year of the Church**

The Church uses a calendar called the liturgical calendar to highlight the seasons and feasts in the Church year. It represents the celebration of the mystery of Christ, beginning with the anticipation of His birth and continuing through His Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. It then moves to the expectation of His return. The Church marks the passage of time with a cycle of seasons and feasts that invites us to deepen our relationship with Jesus.

**Advent:** the beginning of the Church year. It begins four Sundays before Christmas.

**Christmas:** begins on Christmas celebrating the birth of Jesus followed by Epiphany and ends with the Baptism of our Lord.

**Ordinary Time:** the time to follow Jesus as His disciples day by day.

**Lent:** begins on Ash Wednesday and runs for 40 days (not counting Sundays) preparing for Easter

**Holy Week:** recalls the events surrounding the suffering and Death of Jesus.

**Easter:** celebrates Jesus being raised from the dead. We celebrate for 50 days until Pentecost.

## Ten Commandments

The Commandments express man's **fundamental duties** to God and neighbor. As such, they represent *grave* obligations. To violate them knowingly & willingly in a significant way is to commit mortal sin. It's important to note that each Commandment is simply a **summary** of a whole category of actions. Don't be legalistic, searching for a way around them because their wording doesn't fit you perfectly!

**1. I am the LORD your God. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.**

- The *Catechism* explains that this prohibits idolatry, providing examples of forbidden practices such as the worship of any creature, and of "demons ... power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state [and] money".

**2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**

- The *Catechism* states, "Respect for his name is an expression of the respect owed to the mystery of God himself and to the whole sacred reality it evokes."

**3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.**

- Because the faithful are obliged to attend Mass unless there is a grave impediment, pastors have the corresponding duty to offer everyone the real possibility of fulfilling the precept. ... Yet more than a precept, the observance should be seen as a need rising from the depths of Christian life. It is crucially important that all the faithful should be convinced that they cannot live their faith or share fully in the life of the Christian community unless they take part regularly in the Sunday Eucharistic assembly.

**4. Honor your father and your mother.**

- Respect toward parents that also flows to brothers and sisters.
- Gratitude, as expressed in a quote from Sirach: "Remember that through your parents you were born; what can you give back to them that equals their gift to you?"
- Obedience to parents for as long as the child lives at home "when it is for his good or the good of the family", except when obedience would require the child to do something morally wrong.
- Support that requires grown children to offer material and moral support for their aging parents, particularly at times of "illness, loneliness, or distress".

**5. You shall not kill.**

- The *Catechism* states: "Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. ... no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being." The Church defines the moment of conception as the beginning of human life and stresses that the child in the womb must be "defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed, as far as possible, like any other human being".

**6. You shall not commit adultery.**

- Sexual acts are sacred within the context of the marital relationship that reflects a "complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman." Sexual sins thus violate not just the body but the person's whole being.

**7. You shall not steal.**

- The *Catechism* explains that this commandment regulates worldly goods, and forbids unjustly taking, using or damaging those that belong to someone else.

**8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

- The *Catechism* explains that bearing false witness or "speaking a falsehood with the intention of deceiving" encompasses all violations of truth.

**9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.**

- Jesus emphasized the need for pure thoughts as well as actions, and stated, "Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." The *Catechism* states that, with the help of God's grace, men and women are required to overcome lust and bodily desires "for sinful relationships with another person's spouse."

**10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.**

- Desiring something that does not belong to you is prohibited by the tenth commandment because it is considered to be the first step toward commission of theft, robbery and fraud; these may lead to violence and injustice.

## Seven Sacraments

A Sacrament is a ceremony or ritual that points to something that is sacred, significant. As we celebrate the sacraments we are brought closer to God through our actions. These celebrations are our way, here on earth, to physically interact with God.

1. **Sacraments of Initiation:** The three primary Sacraments that mark our entry into the Church and guide the rest of our Christian lives.
  - **Baptism** – The first step in a lifelong journey with God, baptism removes Original Sin from our soul. Catholics often baptize their children as babies to ensure that their soul is clean as they traverse the challenging times of youth.
  - **Eucharist** – ‘Communion’ is both sacrifice and meal. We believe in the real presence of Jesus, who died for our sins. As we receive Christ's Body and Blood, we also are nourished spiritually and brought closer to God.
  - **Confirmation** - Confirmation is a Sacrament of mature Catholic commitment and a deepening of baptismal gifts. When a young person has grown through the faith enough to understand the depth of their journey to God, Confirmation is celebrated. Confirmation is when the gifts of the Holy Spirit are bestowed upon us.
2. **Sacraments of Healing:** We sometimes require healing in body or soul. The Sacraments of Healing offer us the opportunity to recharge and renew with God's help.
  - **Penance and Reconciliation** – At Baptism we are cleansed of all sin. After that, any sins must be removed through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. There are four parts to Reconciliation: Contrition (you must be remorseful for the wrongdoing), Confession (your sins must be confessed to a priest), Absolution (you must be absolved by the priest for the wrongs that you have confessed, Penance (you must make amends through the penance suggested by the absolving priest).
  - **Anointing of the Sick** – if you are ill or of old age and in danger of death, a priest is enabled to administer this Sacrament. Should the health decline further or conditions change, this Sacrament can be administered again.
3. **Sacraments of Service:** We serve our Lord first. Some also choose to serve our fellow human while some dedicate their lives to our God. Either way, the Sacraments of Service are our opportunity to give back.
  - **Matrimony** – Marriage is a sacrament of service because we enter into this sacrament with the intent to serve our God through our relationship with our spouse and family. We share the love of the Lord through our family.
  - **Holy Orders** – Holy Orders is the sacrament by which a man is made a bishop, priest, or deacon, therefore dedicating himself to be an image of Christ. These men dedicate themselves to the service of the Catholic Church and the family of the church.

## Works of Mercy

The Church gives us the Works of Mercy to guide us in living a life of holiness.

The Works of Mercy are acts of loving kindness by which we come to the help of others in their bodily and spiritual needs.

The Corporal Works of Mercy are actions that help people in their bodily needs.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are actions that help people in their spiritual needs.

### The Corporal Works of Mercy:

- To feed the hungry – On the surface, give to those who are in need of food. Beyond this, share your gift of the love of God with those whom you meet. It's not really scary to talk about how much you love the Church. Give it a try...the hungry will be fed through your words!
- To give drink to the thirsty – Again, we must share our food and drink with those in need, but we must also share the river of God's love with those who are in need of a deeper satisfaction.
- To clothe the naked – Of course, go through your closets and find those items that you no longer need to share with those who have none. Finally, bear in mind that those of you who are working hard each day to earn the money to provide food and drink, clothing and shelter for your own families, and those of you who cook and clean at home, are already practicing these corporal works of mercy, at least *outwardly*. Why not practice them *inwardly* now as well, from the heart, not grudgingly or merely out of routine, but with compassion and love for your spouse and children, doing all to the glory of God and giving thanks to God the Father for providing for all your needs (see I Cor 10:31, Col 3:17). In this way, as St. Paul wrote, the simplest daily chore becomes "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God," a true "spiritual worship" (Rom 12:1).
- To harbor the harborless – Sheltering the homeless...How many of us know someone who struggling to pay their rent/mortgage? How many of us know of one in our community who worries about their place to sleep tonight or tomorrow? How can we NOT give back to those in the community who are lacking and praying for a safe place to stay? Maybe we cannot personally pay for a place for them to sleep, but we can help to create a place where people are safe from the harshness of life!
- To visit the sick – How does this apply to us? Have you visited the local nursing home lately? The residents there are lonely and in need of our comfort. Even 30 minutes of your time are welcomed. It does not matter if you know them. It does not matter if you are "family". We are ALL part of God's family, and helping to lift their spirits will lift yours, too!
- To ransom the captive - Visiting those in prison certainly does not mean being "soft on crime." On the contrary, there are some crimes so horrible that their perpetrators must be completely and irrevocably quarantined, put behind bars for a long time or even for life, for the protection of society and to deter other criminals from daring to commit such evil acts in the future. With some violent criminals, society has little choice but to "lock them up and throw away the key." Throw away the key, indeed — but not the *person*. Punishment deters and quarantines and gives the criminal the opportunity to do penance, but friendship and prayer have the capacity to reform and to heal. We can do true works of mercy by reaching out to those in jails and prisons through Bibles and spiritual gifts – even your own letters - that can aid them in their own healing.
- To bury the dead - No doubt most of us make sure that our relatives and friends have a proper funeral service. But we also need to be aware of the needs of those who are grieving: struggling to "bury their dead" emotionally. Grieving can be a long and arduous process; shedding tears at a funeral rarely completes it. We need to help one another to truly bury our lost loved ones by letting go of them, entrusting them to the hands of our merciful Creator and Savior. That takes friendship — a patient friendship that keeps on visiting the bereaved, keeps on helping them dry their tears, even when the grieving process takes many months or even years. This is a precious work of mercy: to help one another emotionally "bury the dead," entrusting them finally to the merciful Heart of the Redeemer.

## The Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- **To instruct the ignorant** - This means, first of all, accepting our God-given responsibility to be the primary source of religious education and formation for our children. Some Catholics may be surprised to learn that it is not the local Catholic school or CCD program upon whom this responsibility primarily rests. Rather, it is the parents.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that "parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children" (2223), and parents are told that through the grace of matrimony, they "receive the responsibility and privilege of evangelizing their children" (2225). This includes, from an early age, reading to our children and grandchildren Bible stories and stories of the lives of the saints, as well as great Christian works such as *The Chronicles of Narnia*. It means providing them with a steady diet of good Christian CDs and videos and weeding out all the dubious ones from our collection that can only cause the loss of their innocence and the confusion of their developing moral characters.

In other words, "Veggie Tales" are *in*; Pokemon is *out*!

It means tight restrictions on the cultural rot flowing into our homes through the TV set ("The Devil's tabernacle," as Mother Angelica once called it) and the Internet. It means praying together as a family, too — perhaps by offering a family Rosary or Chaplet of The Divine Mercy or by reciting as prayers the lyrics of good Christian hymns at bedtime.

We do not have to turn our homes into monasteries and convents, but we do have to heed the exhortation of St. Paul: "Do not be conformed to this world, be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Rom 12:2).

It's not as scary as it sounds, folks. Just pray with your children. Lead them through your example. SHOW them how you expect them to live... Let God live through you and into them! By the way, God understands that your children will read other books/material. Public school makes it impossible to avoid. But know what they are reading, understand what it is and discuss with your kids so that they are prepared for what they will face.

- **To counsel the doubtful** - What a tremendous gift it is from The Divine Mercy when you find someone who really listens to you, who really lets you pour out your heart and share your troubles and miseries, and who then really takes your whole situation in prayer to the Lord *before* presuming to dole out advice to you. Plenty of people are quick to give out half-baked, ill-considered advice! But how many people do you know who *really* listen to you and to the Holy Spirit before they speak?  
*You* can become that person for others if you learn to really listen to the Holy Spirit in your own life first with the help of a spiritual director. Read the New Testament every day and listen to the Lord speaking to you there. Find a good spiritual director and listen to the Lord speaking to you through his or her wise counsel. Then, having learned to listen, you will be ready and able to listen deeply to others.
- **To admonish sinners** – Are you ever offended by the things that your friends post on FaceBook? Or have you ever received a text-message that was worded in a way that you felt would be offensive to God? We must forgive! But we must also share with others that we do not believe that their tactics toward life are right. It is a VERY hard road to take. But it is one that will bring grace to both us and them as we move through life.
- **To bear wrongs patiently** - This is a tough one. In God's merciful love, we certainly ought to share the Catholic Faith with those who are far from Him because they need His mercy so badly. (Don't we all!) It is an act of merciful love to share the faith with those who need it and to pray for them. On the other hand, we must be patient with God's work in other people's lives. We must never harass, pressure, or manipulate anyone. There is a famous bumper sticker that reads, "Please be patient: God is not finished with me yet!" That sums up pretty well what our attitude should be. Our job is but to sow the seeds of faith in the hearts and minds of those who are in grievous error. But change has to come in God's own time. Even if we never see for ourselves the fruit of our efforts, God will surely do His part to water with the grace of conversion the seeds we have planted, when and if people are ready to receive that gift. Until then, we are just to be patient with those in error, to share the truth with them as best we can (acknowledging all the while our own limited grasp of God's revealed truth and limited capacity to adequately express that truth to others), and to pray for them, trusting in God's mercy and patience with us all.
- **To forgive offenses willingly** - "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord" (Rom 12:19). If there is any vengeance that needs to be "dished out," in this life or the next, the only One qualified to do it is the Lord, for He alone knows the secrets of all hearts. Thus, we must always let go of any desire in our hearts for vengeance, and in that sense at least, to forgive our enemies. That means stopping ourselves from exacting "petty vengeance" as well, which includes the use of detraction or slander or gossip to get back at people for the evil they may have done to us.

In short, we are not to curse the darkness, but to pray for those in darkness. (See Mt 5:44.) Whatever temporal harm they may have done to us, those who are evil are in danger of the greatest harm of all: everlasting loss and condemnation. What they have caused us to suffer pales in comparison to what they will suffer eternally if they do not repent.

However, forgiveness is probably the most misunderstood of all the works of mercy. It does NOT mean blindly letting oneself be victimized. You have a duty to protect yourself and your loved ones from harm, for you are all children of God whom He made in His own image and for whom He gave His life on the Cross. That's how valuable and precious you are in the eyes of our merciful Savior!

Forgiving our enemies, therefore, is entirely compatible with reasonable acts of self-protection. For example, forgiveness is entirely compatible with having criminals arrested and placed behind bars where they cannot do further harm to the innocent. Forgiveness is even compatible with the use of lethal force by the police or the military, as a last resort, in fending off violent criminals or aggressive foreign powers. (See Catechism, 2263-2267.)

Clearly, the duty to forgive your enemies is compatible with protecting yourself and your loved ones from harm and demanding high standards of conduct from those close to you, including your own close family members. To prevent and block the spread of evil in these ways is actually a work of mercy, not only toward yourself and your loved ones, but even toward the perpetrators of evil. The perpetrators, after all, often have little chance of ever coming to repentance without the help of the "reality therapy" meted out by those charged with the social responsibility of defending the innocent. In other words, to love and forgive your enemies is not necessarily to let them trample all over you. When there is no effective way to defend oneself or others from harm, then that may be the time and the place meekly to carry the cross of persecution. But that time and place is certainly not *every* time and *every* place!

- **To comfort the afflicted** – We have all been there. In a place of deep need and sadness. It is our calling to help those who cannot simply “deal”, to remember that God is on their side. Most will be able to accept circumstances for what they are, but it often will take our gentle reminder to help them focus on the fact that God is holding them in His hands and will not let them sink. YOUR call is to help those near you to stay above the waves, because God has sent you!
- **To pray for the living and the dead** – We all know someone. Someone who is in need of prayer, for one reason or another. Most of us have lost someone. Someone who touched our hearts in ways that words cannot express. We pray for both those here and those past because we know that our prayers are heard. Those who are living may be healed! Those who are passed may be brought into God's light! The mercy that you offer to those through prayer is a blessing for you and them.

## The Great Commandment

“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.... You shall love your neighbor as yourself. - Matthew 22:37, 39

## The Eight Beatitudes

The Eight Beatitudes form the core of the Christian life. As Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., writes in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, they are the "promises of happiness made by Christ to those who faithfully accept his teaching and follow his divine example." That happiness is not in the future but now for those who conform their lives to Christ.

- **Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
  - o "Poor in spirit" means to be humble. Humility is the realization that all your gifts and blessings come from the grace of God. To have poverty of spirit means to be completely empty and open to the Word of God. When we are an empty cup and devoid of pride, we are humble. Humility brings an openness and an inner peace, allowing one to do the will of God. He who humbles himself is able to accept our frail nature, to repent, and to allow the grace of God to lead us to Conversion.  
It is pride, the opposite of humility, that brings misery. For pride brings anger and the seeking of revenge, especially when one is offended. If every man were humble and poor in spirit, there would be no war!
- **Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.**
  - o St. Gregory of Nyssa taught that the Beatitudes build one upon another. A humble person becomes meek, or becomes gentle and kind, and exhibits a docility of spirit, even in the face of adversity and hardship. A person that is meek is one that exhibits self-control. St. Augustine advises us to be meek in the face of the Lord, and not resist but be obedient to him. Obedience and submission to the will of God are certainly not in vogue these days, but they will bring one peace in this world and in the next.
- **Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.**
  - o If we are humble and appreciate that all of our gifts and blessings come from God, we grow in love and gratitude for Jesus Christ our Savior. But this can only produce mourning and regret over our own sins and the sins of this world, for we have hurt the one who has been so good to us. One also mourns for the suffering of others.  
St. Gregory describes another reason to mourn: the more one ascends in meditation of Divine Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, and then realize the poverty of human nature, man can only be left in sorrow. When one contemplates that we were made in the image and likeness of God and lived in Paradise, the Garden of Eden, and compare that to our present state after the Fall, one can only mourn our present condition. But the sentence continues that *they shall be comforted*, by the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and hopefully one day in the Kingdom of Heaven.  
Mourning in this context is called a blessing, because mourning our fallen nature creates in us a desire to improve ourselves and to do what is right!
- **Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.**
  - o Justice and righteousness in the New Covenant indicate the fulfillment of God's will with your heart. It is not mere observance of the law (Matthew 5:20), but rather an expression of brotherly love (I John 3:10). A continuous desire for justice and moral perfection will lead one to a fulfillment of that desire - a transition and conversion to holiness. This is true for all the virtues - if you hunger and thirst for temperance, you will head towards the goal you have in mind. St. Augustine called the Beatitudes the ideal for every Christian life! In his discourse on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, he noted the correspondence of the seven gifts

of the Holy Spirit and their necessity in fulfilling the Beatitudes. For example, one must have the gift of fortitude so one may be courageous in seeking social justice.

- **Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.**
  - Mercy is the loving disposition towards those who suffer distress. Love, compassion, and forgiveness towards one's neighbor will bring peace in your relationships. We say in the Lord's Prayer: *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.* As we are merciful to others, so our Heavenly Father will be merciful with us! Jesus reminds us that whatever "you did to the least of my brethren, you did it to me (Matthew 25:31-46)." St. Paul calls for the *obedience of faith* in the beginning and end of his Letter to the Romans (1:5, 16:25-27). The following are ways to be merciful to your neighbor as well as to be obedient in faith to Christ our Savior.
- **Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.**
  - Moses (Exodus 33:20), John 1:18, and Paul (I Timothy 6:16) all say that no one can see God here on earth! But Jesus says the pure of heart *shall* see God! To be pure of heart means to be free of all selfish intentions and self-seeking desires. What a beautiful goal! How many times have any of us performed an act perfectly free of any personal gain? Such an act is pure love. An act of pure and selfless giving brings happiness to all.
- **Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God.**
  - Peacemakers not only live peaceful lives but also try to bring peace and friendship to others, and to preserve peace between God and man. St. Gregory of Nyssa calls a peacemaker a man who brings peace to another; but one cannot give another what one does not possess oneself. Hence the Lord wants you first to be yourself filled with the blessings of peace and then to communicate it to those who have need of it. By imitating God's love of man, the peacemakers become children of God.
- **Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
  - The biblical passage continues to elaborate: *"Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you"* (Matthew 5:11-12). Jesus said many times that those who follow Him will be persecuted. *"If they persecute me, they will persecute you"* (John 15:20-21). Stephen, Peter and Paul, nearly all of the Apostles, and many Christians in the Roman era suffered martyrdom. Oppressive governments and endless conflicts in the last one hundred years, such as World Wars I and II, and the Middle East wars in Iraq, Egypt, and Syria have seen their share of martyrs. As in the time of Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 2:23) and the early Christian Church (Acts 24:5), a Christian in the Middle East today is still called a *Nazarene* or in Arabic *Nasrani* or plural *Nasara*. Middle Eastern Christians have suffered severe persecution since the crises in Iraq and Syria. It is estimated that the present turmoil in Syria has resulted in over 700,000 Christian refugees fleeing to Jordan, Lebanon, and other Middle Eastern countries. But the Lord promised those that suffer for his sake will be rewarded with the Kingdom of Heaven!

Persecution does not always mean martyrdom. Sometimes we are persecuted in smaller ways – by being alienated from others in a group, being taunted by those who believe differently, or maybe even suffering acts of violence to our home or church. These acts are not the time to give up, but the time to pray, and be rewarded!