



Pilgrim Paths
Chipping Norton Deanery

Walking the Beatitudes

A Pilgrim Companion

An exploration of The Beatitudes over three and a half days

Choose a path

Find a map

Set your heart on pilgrimage



A pilgrimage...

is a spiritual journey to a sacred place. Pilgrimages have played a major part in the history of Great Britain and Europe, as pilgrims eager to see and touch the relics of saints or the sites of martyrdoms or miracles forged routes across the continent.

Destinations such as Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago de Compostela became famous but there were hundreds of other places to visit and pray.



This booklet is a pilgrimage companion, offering reflections and prayers for your journey. It takes as its starting point the sayings of Jesus known as the Beatitudes, (Matthew 5:1-10). As you travel through the physical landscape of your route, it will guide you on an exploration of the Beatitudes and what they can mean to you and your church today.



Pilgrim God

You are our origin and destination.

Travel with us, we pray,

in every pilgrimage of faith,

And every journey of the heart.

Give us the courage to set off,

The nourishment we need to travel well,

And the welcome we long for

at journey's end.

So may we grow in grace and love of you

And in the service of others,

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Common Worship)

Practical Points

Choosing a route

Decide the length of your journey, and the sort of landscape you wish to explore. Make sure you can return from your destination, or pick a circular route. The journey can take place over consecutive days or separately if you have time constraints.



walking wisely and safely



Do not choose a route which is too far for your level of fitness. Estimate walking speed at about 2 miles (3.25 km) per hour. Don't forget to include rest stops and a place for lunch. If you are travelling alone, you may wish to let someone know where you are going.

Things to take with you

A map (not everywhere has a phone signal), food and water including some spare in case of emergencies, a first aid kit, waterproof clothing.



Above all, bring an open mind and a heart ready to receive the gifts of the journey.

Countryside code – Respect, Protect, Enjoy!

Respect other people – consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors.

Leave gates and property as you find them and walk only on the designated paths.

Protect the natural environment – leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home.

Keep dogs under effective control.

Enjoy the outdoors – plan ahead and be prepared. Follow advice and local signs.



What are the Beatitudes?

The Beatitudes form part of the Sermon on the Mount. They are eight short sayings, which begin with 'Blessed'. They are addressed to the disciples – Jesus has moved away from the crowds and has walked some way up a hill. The disciples must have followed him because they were eager to hear what Jesus said and to learn from him.



What do they mean to us?

If we are to be changed by Jesus' teachings, we must be prepared to reflect, to pray, to be willing to be transformed. But first we must listen. The Beatitudes speak to us if we are willing to hear what they say. They summarise the character of Jesus for us, as they resonate through his actions in the gospels. But they go further than merely showing us who Jesus was – they help us understand how we can become more like him, or rather, more like us – more fully human, more fully the people that God designed us to be. We are called to put aside the world's values and look to the life and character of Christ to show us how to be truly human, truly a child of God. This works for our church as well, as the Beatitudes call us to become more Christ-like not just as individuals but as a community.

THREE CHRIST-LIKE QUALITIES

Contemplative
Compassionate
Courageous

.....in particular are rooted in the Beatitudes and will be explored during this journey.



THE BEATITUDES

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them saying:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness,
for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted
for the sake of righteousness,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

(Matthew 5.1-10)



DAY ONE – Beginning

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

If we are to become poor in spirit we must recognise our need for God. We must acknowledge that at the heart of everything lies our relationship with God. We have been created by him and our lives are his gift to us.

As we begin this journey we ask God to enter our lives more fully. We pray for the grace to discern and remove those obstacles to a right relationship with him and to follow him in faith wherever he leads.

'The poor in spirit are those who are sensitive to God's presence and who walk in his strength.'

(Bishop Steven Croft)



Reflect:

For a journey of any sort to change us, we must be willing to change. Sometimes this process is refreshing and simple; at other times we may find pain and difficulty in growth and development.

Find a stone and examine it closely. Bits of the stone are smooth to the touch; other parts are jagged and rough. So too in our lives and our relationships there will be things that go well and others that do not.

Hold the stone in your hand and as it warms, pray that God will melt the cold, hard places in your heart.



Pray

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you;
I will remove from you your heart of stone
and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)

As you walk:

What distracts you from a closer journey with Christ?

How will you remove these obstacles?



Talking together:

What does the 'kingdom of heaven' mean to you?



DAY ONE – Pausing

'Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.'

We know the world is not as it should be and that God's creation has been spoiled and corrupted by our actions and those of others.

Those who mourn are willing to look pain and suffering full in the face. They are not afraid to take the griefs and tragedies of the world seriously, and do not seek to forget the sorrow of others or themselves.

**'Those who mourn
acknowledge the
brokenness of the
world and offer up
prayers and
lamentations.'**

(Bishop Steven Croft)



While we gaze in sorrow at the gap between our present reality and the way things should be, we will find comfort as we remember God's good purposes for each one of us.

'Rejoice with those who mourn,

weep with those who weep' (Romans 12:15)



Reflect:



Notice the broken and decaying things around you – broken branches, dead leaves on the ground, flowers which are wilting and dying. Pray for the broken of the world – for people who must watch the ones they love suffer and die, for communities whose wellbeing is threatened by economic or natural disaster, for countries torn apart by conflict.

Notice too the signs of new life and growth – buds and fresh shoots, refreshing water in rivers and pools, signs of birds and animals. Rejoice in God's love for all things and the certainty of reconciliation and healing in the coming kingdom.

Pray:

Lord, I hold before you the suffering and pain of this world which is too great for me to bear.

As I travel through the valley of the shadow of death,
let me reach out and take your hand –
for while I might walk unsteadily through the darkness,
you will never stumble or fall.

As you walk:

What makes you mourn?



Talking together:

Walk for a time in silence, offering your speechlessness as a communal mourning.



DAY ONE - Ending

Becoming more Christ-like
Becoming more Contemplative

Making room for God in our lives is vitally important if we are to grow and thrive as human beings and as the people of God. Too often we allow distractions and other commitments to crowd out the time we have set apart for prayer and reflection. But even in the midst of the busyness, we can find a space to slow down and dwell in the love which is our gift from God.

**‘For Christians,
being contemplative
means simply to
spend time with
God.**

**A contemplative
church spends time
with God’**

(Bishop Steven Croft)





Silence

Silence



How might you become more contemplative?

How might your worshipping community become more contemplative?

DEAR DIARY..

What will you remember from today?

What have you learnt about God?

What have you learnt about yourself?

DAY TWO – Beginning

'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.'

Being meek does not mean being a doormat – one who is truly meek lays aside their privileges and status in order to enable others. Jesus demonstrated meekness when he washed the feet of his disciples, showing love and care for each individual.

Once we stop being concerned for our position and power in the world, and focus on God, we will be freed to worship him with our whole hearts.

'Meekness is the foundation of prayer and contemplation. We come before God able to see God's glory, the worth and needs of others, and the glories of creation' (Bishop Steven Croft)



When we put the needs of others before those of ourselves, we will share in Christ's humility, walking with him in love and charity.

Reflect:

One of the features of pilgrimage is the kindness that is offered and accepted by fellow travellers and by communities through which we journey. Recall those who have shown hospitality and generosity to you in your journey through life, and give thanks for their service to you as you pledge to become the servant of others.

Pray:

O God, make the door of my house wide enough to receive all who need human love and fellowship, and narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride and strife. Make my threshold smooth enough to be no stumbling-block to children, nor to straying feet, but rugged and strong enough to turn back the tempter's power.

God – make the door of my house the gateway to your eternal kingdom.” (Thomas Ken (1637-1711.))

As you walk:

How will you offer loving service today?

Talking together:

How might your worshipping community demonstrate ‘meekness’?



DAY TWO – Pausing

'Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.'

When we seek righteousness, we long for a deep personal relationship with God, knowing ourselves to be forgiven and forgiving others in our turn.

But we should not stop at this.

To become more Christ-like involves echoing Christ's compassion for others; sharing his concern for the poor and the suffering and working for justice for all.

'To be fully human means to live out the innate longing for fairness which is an essential part of each of us.'

(Bishop Steven Croft)



Reflect and Pray:

Take a piece of bread in your hands.

Jesus, bread of life,
I hold this bread in my hands and I thank you.
I have food to eat,
and people to share this food with.
I pray for those who have neither.



Bread is the only material thing asked for in the Lord's Prayer – 'give us this day our daily bread'. So Jesus reminds us that we should ask only for that which is necessary to sustain us, and reassures us that this will be provided.

Jesus, bread of life,
So often I am concerned with the luxuries of life;
So often I seek comfort where I should seek truth;
So often I seek to please myself when I should care for others first.
Forgive me.

Break the bread, remembering Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross.

Eat it slowly, celebrating the gift of life which this sacrifice brought to us.

As you walk:

Consider how you might become more engaged with justice issues in your community



Talking together:

Walk for a time in silence, praying for those who long for justice, but find none.



DAY TWO - Ending

Becoming more Christ-like
Becoming more Compassionate

‘Sing to the Lord a new song’

(Psalm 96)

When the world is being shaken,
we must sing a new song of hope.

When the world is hurting,

We must sing the new song of
healing and salvation.

When the world grieves, we sing
new songs of resurrection.

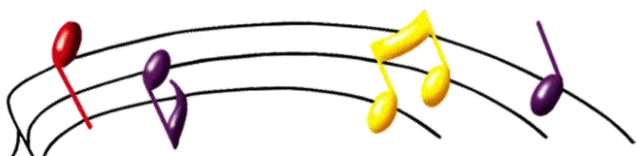
When the world grows more
unfair, we must sing God’s new
song of justice.’

(Bishop Steven Croft)

‘Compassionate
people feel and
show sympathy and
concern for others.

A compassionate
church laments or
mourns with the
suffering in the
world and is full of
mercy which leads
to action’.

(Bishop Steven Croft)





How might you become more compassionate?

How might your worshipping community become more compassionate?



What will you remember from today?

What have you learnt about God?

What have you learnt about yourself?

DAY THREE – Beginning

*'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall
obtain mercy.'*

Being merciful involves changing our attitude towards others. We must move from intolerance to understanding, from condemnation to loving forgiveness.

Sometimes this will be difficult to achieve; wounds may be deep, actions hard to forgive. At these times we can look beyond our own hearts to the heart of God, who will transform us through his own loving mercy.

'The general meaning of mercy is love and kindness.

The specific meaning is focussed around mercy as forgiveness. God's love is constant for us, even when we fall short.'

(Bishop Steven Croft)



Then, in our turn, we will be able to seek, and receive, the forgiveness we need so badly.

Reflect:

The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil which stood at the centre of the Garden of Eden is traditionally held to be an apple. So it was an apple that became the symbol of Adam and Eve's sin in wishing to be like God. We think of our own faults, the things we have said and done that we should not have done, and the things that we neglected to say or do.



Pray:

Gracious God, I have sinned.

There are many things in my life of which I am not proud.

There are many ways in which I have wilfully tried to destroy the precious creation which is me.

Sometimes I have deliberately chosen the wrong way; sometimes this has been by accident.

I am sorry, Lord, truly I am.

I know you will forgive me; this you have promised.

Help me to feel forgiven.

As you walk:

Is there someone in your life whom you need to forgive?



Talking together:



How can we be a 'community of mercy'?

DAY THREE – Pausing

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

The pure in heart are those who practise 'living without appropriating', a way of life made famous by St Francis of Assisi. The pure in heart sit lightly to the material and status objects of this world, owning them without being owned by them, valuing people for their character not their power, for their virtues rather than their possessions, for their gifts rather than their appearances.

The pure in heart know that wholeness comes only from a right relationship with God; from walking in his ways and following where he leads.

'Many people in our world live from the outside in: we are concerned with image, with prestige, with masks and with outward appearances.'

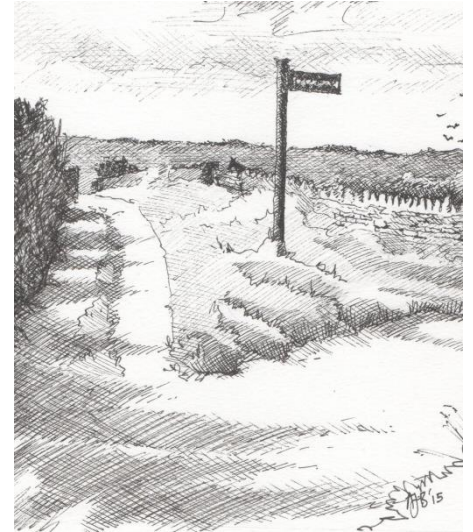
(Bishop Steven Croft)

*'The secret of the Lord is theirs,
Their heart is Christ's abode'
(John Keble)*



Reflect:

As you walk, notice how the geography of the landscape changes. Be particularly mindful of the path you are following. Notice how its texture changes – sometimes the route is soft earth, other times it is roadway. At times there are obstacles – branches or nettles, stiles or gates.



Reflect on your life's path- which times have gone easily for you and when has the journey been difficult or challenging?

Pray:

Thanks be to Thee my Lord Jesus Christ
For all the benefits thou hast given me
For all the pains and insults thou has borne for me.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother
May I know thee more clearly;
Love thee more dearly;
And follow thee more nearly, day by day. (Richard of Chichester)



As you walk:

What experiences in your life have brought you closer to God?



Talking together:

Walk for a time in silence; how are you aware of God's presence?

DAY THREE - Ending

Becoming more Christ-like
Becoming more Courageous

Courageous living involves standing up for truth and justice in an unfair, unjust world. It asks us to speak for those who have no voice, to act for those who are powerless. We must not be afraid to declare our faith to those around us, whatever the cost might be. We must seek to live out the gospel boldly, aware that our words and actions will be judged.



‘The Church needs to live courageously in a fragmented world: to live out our call to love God and our neighbour through seeking justice and peace and bearing witness to our faith.’

(Bishop Steven Croft)



*What courageous step might you make in your faith journey?
How might your worshipping community become more courageous?*

DEAR DIARY..

What will you remember from today?

What have you learnt about God?

What have you learnt about yourself?

DAY FOUR – Beginning

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.'

Living in community isn't easy; being a peacemaker often brings about those feelings which are far from peaceful – anger, hurt, exhaustion. Careful negotiations must be entered into, compromises made, old wounds forgiven, insults forgotten.

Peacemaking is a vocation to which all Christians are called, a challenge thrown out to us by the Son of God as he stood before the crowd that day so long ago and gave us a matrix for life, a scaffold around which to build our everyday thoughts and actions, raising a structure of love to act as an example of hope and light to those around us.

'Peace, or shalom, is more than the absence of conflict. Shalom means wholeness and wellbeing and fulfilment and reconciliation.'

(Bishop Steven Croft)



Reflect:

Jesus tells us we must forgive our 'brother or sister' 'seventy times seven' (Matthew 18:21,22).

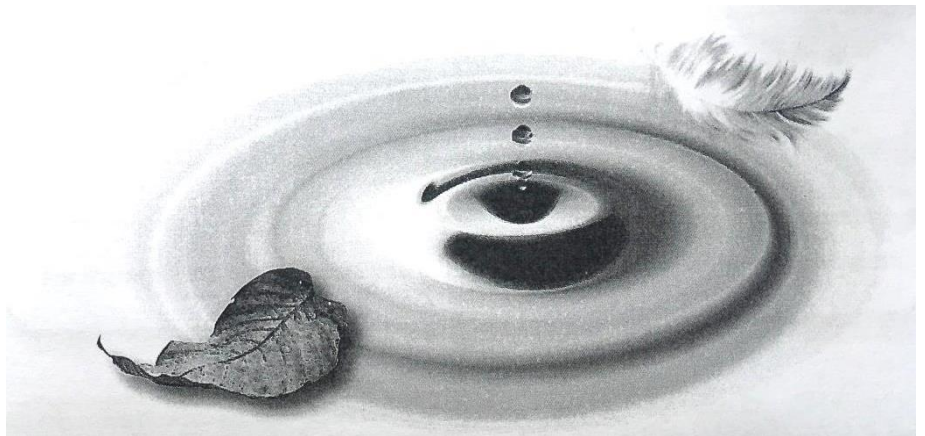
Are there people with whom you would like to become reconciled? Name them in your heart and ask for God's blessing on your relationship with them. Pray for the grace to forgive, and to be forgiven.

You may like to pick up a stick or twig to represent the person with whom your relationship is difficult. When you find a stream or river, float it on the water, and let the current take away your anger or hurt.

Pray:

Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give to you.
I do not give to you as

the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. (John 14:27)



As you walk:

What does 'shalom' mean to you?



Talking together:



What does a peacemaking church look like?

FINISHING WELL

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'



This final Beatitude invites us to stand alongside all those who suffer and are persecuted for their faith, encouraging us to bear witness in our own communities to the life-giving message of the gospel.

But it asks more of us.

We are called to offer all that we are and all that we have in the service of Christ and the gospel across the whole length of our lives.

'Our Christian faith is not a hobby or a spare-time activity. Jesus calls us to follow with the whole of our lives and for the whole of our lives: to offer everything in God's service.'

(Bishop Steven Croft)

Pray:

Lord, grant that I may always allow myself to be guided by you, always follow your plans and perfectly accomplish your holy will. Grant that in all things great and small, I may do whatever you require of me. May your will be done in time and in eternity by me, in me and through me. Amen (St Teresa of Avila)

Reflect:

Take time to reflect on your journey.

What discoveries have you made about yourself – physically, emotionally and spiritually?

Which parts of the pilgrimage have you found most challenging?

Which have been the most joyful?



A Prayer for the Diocese

God of gentleness and love,
draw near to us as we draw near to
you.
Dwell in every heart and conversation.
Fashion us into the likeness
of your Son Jesus Christ
Help us to discern together all
that you are calling us to be
and all that you are calling us to do.
Assist us, by your Spirit,
to become a more contemplative,
more compassionate and
more courageous church.
For the building of your kingdom
and the glory of your Son. Amen



walking with children

Walking with children is a wonderful activity. The opportunity to spend time together without the distractions of modern life can set us free to enjoy time together – playing games, having conversations, exploring the landscape. Memories can be forged that will last into adult life. That the journey is not just a walk but a pilgrimage, with its layers of history and purpose, can give an added interest to the outing, transforming it from a walk into an adventure.



Make sure to pack the right clothing – take extra sweaters in case of cold, and always bring waterproofs! Don't forget the sun lotion and insect repellent and include cream for insect bites in your first aid kit. Take plenty of food and drink as well as snacks to boost energy levels. A sharp knife, some string, sticky tape and a pen and paper are always useful.

If simply walking along the path loses its attraction there are a number of games that can be played both while walking and during breaks. Once attention is absorbed by these, the miles can disappear very rapidly!



Games while walking

Find an object along the path which other members of the group have to guess by touch.

Collect - list five or ten things to collect, depending on the age of the group
eg: grass seed, a soft object, a prickly object, something a bird might eat, etc

Explore – give each person a matchbox which they have to fill with as many different objects as possible.



Look for an object for every colour of the rainbow – purple, dark blue, light blue, green, yellow, orange, red.

Make a 'Journey stick' – find a stick that is not too long and quite sturdy and as the journey continues, collect interesting and decorative objects and attach to the stick by wrapping string or wool around the object.



Listen for as many different sounds as possible – what can you hear?

Games for the Pauses

Surface rubbings



Not just trees can be rubbed – try interesting pathways, signs, building surfaces...simply place a piece of paper over the object and rub gently with a crayon or pencil.

When you get home, make a collage of the journey using different textures collected along the way.

Find an 'ALIEN OBJECT' - why should it not be there?



Make a **nature crown**

Bend a stick or plant into a circle for the headband then collect feathers, sticks, grasses. Tie these onto the circlet with wool or string to form a spectacular crown.

Build a house for a mouse!

using moss, stones, bark, make a miniature house or nest, as elaborate as possible.





DIOCESE OF OXFORD

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire



EXPLORING THE BEATITUDES