

Jackie has never married, but she might some day if the right guy comes along. Her standards are high. She leads a simple lifestyle. She's talented; she could make more money and buy more things if she wanted, but she's happy with her job and finds it more fulfilling than the clutter she sees in other peoples' lives. Jackie is poor in spirit. The reign of God is hers.

Norm just celebrated 25 years of married life with his wife. All their friends congratulated them. But their friends didn't know what Norm knew. His son is selling drugs. Last weekend amid all the parties it was hard to keep smiling. He loved his son and his son was making him sad. Norm is sorrowing. He shall be consoled.

Bert was laid off work a month ago. For the first time in his life he has no income with which to support his family. He has never felt so useless. He volunteers at church, he helps around the house, he makes job applications. He knows it's a long lonely road ahead. Bert is lowly. He will inherit the land.

Larry is gay. He's doing the best he can even though his parents won't talk to him. His biggest concern these days is that he wants to quit smoking. He comes to church each week and prays every day for personal strength and peace in his family. Larry hungers and thirsts for holiness. He shall have his fill.

Michelle is a Eucharistic minister. She was divorced about six months ago and raising the kids by herself has been infinitely harder than she ever could have imagined. Still, each week she faithfully brings communion to her shut-in. She doesn't make a big production out of it. She just goes. It's something she can do to put order in her life. Michelle shows mercy. Mercy shall be hers.

Clara has been a widow 12 years now. She still misses her husband. She goes to daily Mass to pray for the repose of his soul and for all the faithful departed. She's quite active for a woman her age, but her favorite times are the times she spends in prayer. Clara is single-hearted. She shall see God.

John was the last child to leave home. He's married now with children of his own. He can't understand why his parents keep getting on each other's nerves. Aren't people supposed to be happy after they retire? He visits them every week and tells them he loves them. It's his way of keeping the family together. John is a peacemaker. He shall be called a child of God.

Maria goes to a Catholic high school. She is the only Hispanic in her class and the Anglos all make fun of her. Maria was taught to be proud of her family and its customs. But she just can't seem to make anyone understand. Maria is persecuted for holiness' sake. The reign of God is hers.

One Sunday morning these eight people went to the same Mass. There they heard the words of Jesus calling them by name: "Blest are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward in heaven is great." They rejoiced and they were glad, for they knew that the struggles of this life fade before the glories of the life to come.