Francis, the comic strip
Pope Francis and Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti of Perugia-Citta della Pieve, president of the Itali

Pope Francis and Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti of Perugia-Citta della Pieve, president of the Italian bishops' conference, attend the extraordinary general assembly of the Italian bishops on "the synodal journey of the church in Italy," in Rome Nov. 22, 2021. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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Pope Francis invited Italy's bishops to live the "beatitudes of a bishop," an adaptation of the traditional Eight Beatitudes to provide guiding principles for being a "good shepherd" of a diocese.

Blessed is the bishop who walks a path of poverty and sharing, of accompanying those who suffer, of humility that finds joy in hard effort, of justice, of mercy, of peace and tenderness, according to the new set of beatitudes, written in Italian.

The invitation came during a two-hour closed-door meeting Nov. 22 with Italian bishops, who were meeting in Rome Nov. 22-25 for an extraordinary general assembly on "The synodal journey of the church in Italy."

The pope traveled by car to the Rome hotel where the bishops were meeting and opened the assembly for what was a "strictly private encounter," according to a written statement by the Vatican press office Nov. 22.

However, the press office shared a copy of the card that the pope distributed to all the bishops at the assembly as part of "launching a conversation with the bishops." The card had a color image of "The Good Shepherd" painting by the German Renaissance artist Lucas Cranach der Ältere and, on the reverse, listed "The Beatitudes of the Bishop."

The beatitudes were created by Italian Archbishop Mimmo Battaglia of Naples, who was dubbed "Bergoglio of the South" while he was a bishop of another southern Italian diocese and continued his work as a "street priest," especially in aiding those with drug dependencies.

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The archbishop, 58, presented the beatitudes during a homily ordaining three new auxiliary bishops for Naples in October; they were reproduced on the card distributed by the pope:

- "Blessed is the bishop who makes poverty and sharing his way of life, so that by his witness he is building up the kingdom of heaven.
- "Blessed is the bishop who is not afraid of tears streaming down his face, so that in them may be mirrored the pains of the people, the hard work of priests, finding God's consolation in the embrace with those who suffer.
- "Blessed is the bishop who considers his ministry a service and not power, making meekness his strength, giving everyone the right to hold citizenship in his heart, to inhabit the land promised to the meek.
- "Blessed is the bishop who does not shut himself up in the palaces of governance, who does not become a bureaucrat who is more attentive to statistics than to faces, to procedures than to stories, who is seeking to fight alongside humanity for God's dream of justice because the Lord, encountered in the silence of daily prayer, will be his nourishment.
- "Blessed is the bishop who has a heart for the misery of the world, who is not afraid to dirty his hands with the mud of the human soul in order to find God's gold, who is not scandalized by the sin and frailty of others because he is aware of his own misery, so that the gaze of the Risen Crucified One will be a seal of

infinite forgiveness for him.

- "Blessed is the bishop who banishes duplicity of heart, who avoids every ambiguous dynamic, who dreams of the good even in the midst of evil, because he will be able to rejoice in God's countenance, discovering his reflection in every puddle of the city of mankind.
- "Blessed is the bishop who works for peace, who accompanies journeys of reconciliation, who sows the seed of communion in the heart of the presbytery, who accompanies a divided society along the path of reconciliation, who takes every man and woman of goodwill by the hand to build fraternity: God will recognize him as his son.
- "Blessed is the bishop who is not afraid to go against the tide for the sake of the Gospel, making his face 'stern' like that of Christ on his way to Jerusalem, without letting himself be held back by misunderstandings and obstacles because he knows that the kingdom of God advances in the contradiction of the world."