

# January 29, 2023

## Cycle A – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

Psalm: 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Matthew 5:1-12a

### Notes from Bishop Peter

1. The theme that stands out in today's scripture readings is humility. It comes from words meaning earth and humor. Humble people are "down to earth," and usually have a good sense of humor. They take others seriously but not themselves and are quick to poke fun at themselves.
  - a. Former president George W. Bush at Yale, his alma mater, after being given an honorary degree said, "Congratulations to you A students. As for you C students, you too can become president of the USA."
2. What does "blessed" mean? How happy you should be or even hooray for you.
3. What does "The Kingdom of God" mean? A simple way to focus on this expression is found in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In heaven, the blessed conform totally to God's will since they are filled with joy and recognize that doing God's will makes them happy. On earth we struggle to know God's will and to put it into practice in our complex daily lives. We have guidance, though, from the life of Jesus to Church teaching to the 10 Commandments and most of all because of the Holy Spirit in our hearts who moves us to love God, that includes doing God's will.
4. What does "poor in spirit" mean? Basically that without God's power, we are helpless to do good. The poor in spirit are humble; they realize that they need God's inspiration and help in every aspect of their lives – science, business, within the home and so forth. It includes simplicity of life since the pursuit of riches for the sake of building up the ego excludes those persons from the Kingdom.
  - a. People who follow the twelve step programs of AA, NA, OA realize that without God they are unable to remain sober, drug free or able to follow a difficult diet program.
  - b. Also, the virtue of humility runs through all of these "Beatitudes." Without it, they make no sense.

Most importantly, Jesus is the model for these points. He was humble, becoming obedient even to the point of death, death on a cross!

- c. Thus this first beatitude may be translated: Happy those who have realized their helplessness and who have put their whole trust in God, for now they can render to God that perfect obedience which will make them citizens of his Kingdom.
5. Now, “Blessed are they who mourn for they will be comforted.” This goes beyond mourning the death of a beloved person. It may be translated thus: Happy those whose hearts are broken for the world’s suffering and for their own sins. Out of their sorrow they will find the joy of God. I am sure this rings true in the hearts of all who read this.
  6. “Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the land.” How can this be? It implies tremendous discipline to be able to control every instinct, every impulse and passion. This takes a lot of work over a long period of time.
    - a. When people say they are not religious but they are spiritual, do they take into consideration the teaching of this beatitude? Unfortunately most people are unaware of the work it takes to attain this goal.
    - b. Thus one may translate this Beatitude: Happy are those who are always angry at the right time and never at the wrong time and who have every instinct under control and who have the humility to realize their own ignorance and weakness, for they will possess the earth.
    - c. In this context Saint Augustine wrote, “Discipline yourselves and the world lies at your feet.
  7. Let’s move to the 7<sup>th</sup> Beatitude: “Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God.” This includes facing issues that divide people and doing all we can to work with others with the goal of breaking down barriers that divide in order to bring people together.
    - a. Jesus did this by reaching out to the lepers, to tax collectors (St. Matthew was one of them), including women in his band of disciples and responding to the needs of the Romans who were despised by the people.
    - b. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King is a modern example of one who reached out to white people and other racial groups for the good of our country. And he was criticized because he did this.

- c. Thus this Beatitude may be translated: Happy are those who produce right relationships between and among people for they are doing God's work.
- 8. There is so much more in these eight Beatitudes and I have only briefly treated four of them. Those of you who are interested can go on line for more information.
- 9. We move now to the Eucharistic part of the Mass. It is Jesus who is the Blessed one and who helps us from within to follow his program to enter the Kingdom of God and even to bring others with us.

***Amen.***

(Full disclosure: Much of this material comes from the fine commentary on the Gospel of Matthew by William Barkley.)