



# LIVING THE GOSPEL

**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
February 1<sup>st</sup> 2026**

**Theme: "Rejoice and be glad"**

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## **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** Grant us, Lord our God that we may honor you with all our mind, and love everyone in truth of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:1-12**

<sup>1</sup> Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. <sup>2</sup> Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

<sup>3</sup> 'How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage.

<sup>5</sup> Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

<sup>6</sup> Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied.

<sup>7</sup> Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

<sup>8</sup> Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup> Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God.

<sup>10</sup> Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> 'Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account.

<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.'

## **Gospel Focus**

In teaching from the mountain, Jesus signifies that he, like Moses, is the giver of God's authoritative law. Unlike Moses, however, Jesus claims that, this teaching authority is his own. With the frequent use of the formula, "You have heard it was said...But I say to you..." Jesus proclaims that he himself is the word of God. Within this Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes are the most essential proclamation of Jesus. They share the good news of the kingdom of heaven, which is good news especially for those who have little esteem in the eyes of the world-the meek, the merciful the mourning, and the poor in spirit. Those who suffer for the sake of proclaiming this good news shall be rewarded greatly. If we share in the suffering and death of Christ, in solidarity with those who suffer in the world, we too shall in his resurrection and life.

## Gospel Reflection

How do we find fulfilment and joy when the effects of sin and strife have marred the past and when hunger, poverty, devastation of planet, ongoing wars and terrorism point to a bleak future? In today's gospel Jesus sums up in eight statements a way of life that brings true happiness and blessing already in the present, along with the promise of fullness of joy in days to come. There is nothing terribly new in this teaching. The prophets and wisdom teachers before Jesus spoke in a similar manner (e.g., Prov 3:13; 28:14; Sir 25:7-9; Isa 30:18; 32:20). Each statement of the beatitudes begins, *makarior hoi*, "Blessed (or happy) are those who..." Each is the third-person plural, indicating communal action and relationship. The first thing the Beatitudes tell us, then is that living them is not an individual pursuit.

The Beatitudes name the way in which peoples' happiness is threatened: grinding poverty (the Greek *ptocoh* in v3 denotes "the beggar," one who is destitute), grief, landlessness, hunger, war, and persecution. Jesus does not advise that those so afflicted simply wait for a reversal of fortune in the hereafter, though the final verse does speak of great reward in heaven.

To be meek is not to be shrinking violets who accept injustice but, rather, to know our proper place as children of God and to ensure that all are treated as full heirs to God's realm. To be peace builders, we are to engage in acts of mercy and forgiveness, which cleanse the heart and allow us to see God in the faces of our brothers and sisters here and now. And like the grieving women who went to the tomb of Jesus, we do not mourn in despair when we suffer loss but we allow our sorrow to be transformed by hope in the risen One.

Such a manner of life is able to heal the hurtful memories of the past and to transform the present toward a hopeful future. This is not proposed as an intense form of Christianity meant for only a few select persons (as some in past generations suggested). Jesus addresses the teaching to all his disciples and to a great crowd, inviting them to recognize their capacity of happiness in the present by espousing attitudes and actions that will influence the future.

Jesus' teaching is different from the often-quoted maxim of Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-64): "Happiness is a butterfly, which, when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you." Happiness is available to us when we pursue Jesus' manner of living, which is already within our grasp.

## Old and New Testament links

### **First Reading — Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13**

<sup>3</sup> Seek the Lord, all you, the humble of the earth, who obey his commands. Seek integrity, seek humility: you may perhaps find shelter on the day of the anger of the Lord. ...

<sup>12</sup> In your midst I will leave a humble and lowly people, and those who are left in Israel will seek refuge in the name of the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> They will do no wrong, will tell no lies; and the perjured tongue will no longer be found in their mouths. But they will be able to graze and rest with no one to disturb them.

### **Responsorial Reading — Psalm 146:6-10**

***R: How happy are the poor in spirit: theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever, who is just to those who are oppressed.  
It is he who gives bread to the hungry, the Lord, who sets prisoners free. **(R)**

It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, who raises up those who are bowed down,  
the Lord, who protects the stranger and upholds the widow and orphan. **(R)**

It is the Lord who loves the just but thwarts the path of the wicked. **(R)**  
The Lord will reign for ever, Zion's God, from age to age.

## **Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

<sup>26</sup> Take yourselves for instance, brothers, at the time when you were called: how many of you were wise in the ordinary sense of the word, how many were influential people, or came from noble families? <sup>27</sup> No, it was to shame the wise that God chose what is foolish by human reckoning, and to shame what is strong that he chose what is weak by human reckoning; <sup>28</sup> those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones that God has chosen – those who are nothing at all to show up those who are everything. <sup>29</sup> The human race has nothing to boast about to God, but you, <sup>30</sup> God has made members of Christ Jesus and by God's doing he has become our wisdom, and our virtue, and our holiness, and our freedom. <sup>31</sup> As scripture says: if anyone wants to boast, let him boast about the Lord.

## **Catechism of The Catholic Church**

**520.** In all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model*. He is "the perfect man", who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way.

**544.** The kingdom belongs *to the poor and lowly*, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor"; (Lk 4:18; cf. 7:22) he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:3) To them - the "little ones" the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned. (Cf. Mt 11:25) Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation. (Cf. Mt 21:18; Mk 2:23-26; Jn 4:6-7; 19:28; Lk 9:58) Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom. (Cf. Mt 25:31-46)

**2305.** Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the *peace of Christ*, the messianic "Prince of Peace." (Isa 9:5) By the blood of his Cross, "in his own person he killed the hostility," (Eph 2:16 J.B.; cf. Col 1:20-22) he reconciled men with God and made his Church the sacrament of the unity of the human race and of its union with God. "He is our peace." (Eph 2:14) He has declared: "Blessed are the peacemakers." (Mt 5:9)

**2518.** The sixth beatitude proclaims, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Mt 5:8) "Pure in heart" refers to those who have attuned their intellects and wills to the demands of God's holiness, chiefly in three areas: charity; (Cf. 1 Tim 4:3-9; 2 Tim 2:22) chastity or sexual rectitude; (Cf. 1 Thess 4:7; Col 3:5; Eph 4:19) love of truth and orthodoxy of faith. (Cf. Titus 1:15; 1 Tim 1:3-4; 2 Tim 2:23-26) There is a connection between purity of heart, of body, and of faith:

The faithful must believe the articles of the Creed "so that by believing they may obey God, by obeying may live well, by living well may purify their hearts, and with pure hearts may understand what they believe." (St. Augustine, *De fide et symbolo* 10, 25: PL 40, 196)

**2546.** "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (Mt 5:3) The Beatitudes reveal an order of happiness and grace, of beauty and peace. Jesus celebrates the joy of the poor, to whom the Kingdom already belongs (Cf. Lk 6:20)

The Word speaks of voluntary humility as "poverty in spirit"; the Apostle gives an example of God's poverty when he says: "For your sakes he became poor." (St. Gregory of Nyssa, De Beatitudinibus 1: PG 44, 1200D; cf. 2 Cor 8:9)

### **Sharing and Discussion**

1. Jesus proclaims blessing in ways that overturn ordinary assumptions about success and happiness. What understanding of "a good life" has shaped you most—and how does Jesus' vision challenge or refine it?
2. The mountain setting suggests distance from noise, urgency, and self-justification. What inner noise or resistance makes it difficult for you to hear Christ's teaching clearly today?
3. The promises of the Beatitudes point toward intimacy with God, not mere reward. When you turn to God, are you seeking His blessings—or seeking Him?

### **Closing Prayer**

**Facilitator:** Loving God hear the prayers we humbly offer. Help us grow in relationship with others and with you. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**Facilitator:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen