

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12–13
1 Corinthians 1:26–31
Matthew 5:1–12

MONDAY

Mark 5:1–20
“Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”

TUESDAY

Mark 5:21–43
“The child is not dead but sleeping.”

WEDNESDAY*

Luke 2:22–40
“... they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord...”

THURSDAY

Mark 6:7–13
“Then he went about among the villages teaching.”

FRIDAY

Mark 6:14–29
“Jesus’ name had become known.”

SATURDAY

Mark 6:30–34
“Come away... and rest a while.”

*The Presentation of the Lord

Blessed Are You

The Sermon on the Mount, or Beatitudes, appears in both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. In Matthew, it is the first of the five discourses that are a central part of the structure of this Gospel. While Luke places the event on a plain, Matthew indicates that Jesus is on a mountain, like the new Moses, the Teacher who gives the new Law.



According to Matthew’s theology, the Beatitudes are the new commandments for the community of faith; unlike that in Luke, it is addressed not only to the disciples but also to the crowds. The section we read today describes those who will be blessed (happy). Among them, “the poor in spirit”: in the Old Testament,

the poor (*ānāwim*) are those who are without material possessions and whose trust is only in God. Matthew added “in spirit,” which extends the beatitude to all, whatever their social rank, who recognize their complete dependence on God. Those who mourn will be comforted by God. Those who seek to do God’s will shall be satisfied. Those whose hearts are clean will see God, not only in the

temple as described by Psalm 24:4, but in the coming of the kingdom. Finally, Matthew encourages the early Christians who were being persecuted with the words of Jesus, “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”



The Faith of the Church

Jesus came to “preach the good news to the poor” whom he calls blessed. He identifies with them from the cradle to the cross. The Beatitudes are a challenge for all Christians and call us to seek God above all else because true happiness is not found in wealth, power, fame, or even a person, but in God alone who is the source of all love and goodness (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 544, 1723).



Questions of the Week

The Beatitudes are a radical invitation to all Christians to revisit our priorities. Jesus is asking us to value everything that society rejects: poverty, suffering, hunger, etc. and blesses us if we are poor in spirit or persecuted for his sake.

Adults

Which Beatitude do I identify with in my own life? How or why?

Children

Am I a peacemaker as Jesus asks me to be or do I ever bully others?

Visit us at www.FaithFirst.com (click on “Gospel Reflections”) and share today’s Gospel reading as a family.

Responding to God's Word . . .

The Beatitudes stand in contrast to the common notion of happiness. They do not make sense to the unbeliever and sometimes not even to believers. How can we accept that things that we consider calamities could be blessings?

At the time Matthew wrote the Sermon, the Roman Empire controlled the Holy Land. People were expecting a savior—a warrior who would restore the kingdom of Israel. Instead, Jesus appears, defying their expectations.

How could they win a war by being merciful to their enemies; how could peacemakers defeat the Roman

Empire? These unexpected blessings turned upside down the values of the time that held that wealth and prosperity were signs of God's favor.

The Beatitudes are not meant to exalt poverty and suffering, but to assure us that as followers of Christ, we can trust God's love for us and his presence even in bad times. They also remind us of how radical the Gospel is. In the violent society of his time, Jesus blessed the peacemakers, and called them children of God. Today, his words continue to challenge us to be poor in spirit, peacemakers, and willing to suffer for the sake of justice.

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. During this week, try to avoid unnecessary conflicts and try to be peacemakers whenever possible.

In the workplace or in school. When you are with your friends or coworkers, remember that being a peacemaker does not mean letting others bully you!

In the community. Join others in your community to organize seminars on home and street violence and how to deal with these evils of our society.



Meditation Moment

A Hindu parable concerns two friends: a mud pie and a dry leaf. One day, they decide to pilgrimage to the holy city of Benares. Knowing the wind and the rain will be their enemies on the pilgrimage, they devise a plan for protection. When the wind blows, the mud pie will sit on the dry leaf; and when the rain pours, the leaf will sit on the mud pie to keep it dry. The plan worked fine, until one day the wind blew and the rain poured at the same time. The result? The leaf blew away and the mud pie dissolved into nothingness.

For reflection . . .

To be "poor in spirit" means to realize that we cannot go through life alone. There will be times when even our friends can't help us. We will need God.

[JESUS SAID,] "I AM THE VINE,
AND YOU ARE THE BRANCHES . . .
YOU CAN DO NOTHING WITHOUT ME."
JOHN 15:5

FROM *VISION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

Let Us Sing to Our God!

We sing to you our God;
We come into your presence
with thanksgiving; and sing with
songs of praise!
For you are a great and compassionate
God, who loves us unconditionally.
In your hand are the depths of the earth;
and also the heights of the mountains.
We thank and worship you,
O God, our Maker!
For you are our God, and we
are your people, the work of
your hands. Amen.

ADAPTED FROM PSALM 95

Carry this thought in your heart as a
guide for your faith journey this week.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children
of God . . . You are the salt of
the earth . . . You are the light of
the world . . . let your light shine
before others, so that they may
see your good works and give
glory to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:9, 13-14

Profile in Faith

Blessed Angela de Foligno
(1248-1309)

Angela lived for wealth and social status, but at 40 she dedicated herself to prayer and works of charity. Shortly after her conversion, her husband and children died. Angela entered the Secular Franciscans and wrote her *Book of Visions and Instructions*. This book and her life earned her the title "Teacher of Theologians."
Feast Day: January 7

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