



# Bringing Home the Word



Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time January 29, 2017

## The Beautiful Beatitudes

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

**T**o follow Christ is to seek lowliness, humility, mercy, and righteousness. The Ten Commandments summarize God's teaching to his people. Jesus gives us a new law that builds on the old. Before it was, "You shall not..."; now it is, "Blessed are you when..." He calls us to greater happiness, greater blessing, but it comes with a challenge. Saint Augustine says that Jesus went up the mountain to preach the Beatitudes because he was preaching a higher moral doctrine:

### Sunday Readings

#### Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

"A people humble and lowly, who shall take refuge in the name of the LORD—the remnant of Israel."

#### 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

"God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise...the weak of the world to shame the strong."

#### Matthew 5:1-12a

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

"greater precepts of righteousness."

The new law contradicts what our wounded human nature tends to think and feel. We are challenged to believe blessings can come from tears, meekness, and poverty.

"Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness" (Matthew 5:10). Appreciating these truths requires transforming our minds and hearts. Faith is required. Deeply desiring and living in the right does bring satisfaction. There is consolation in mourning the things that sadden Christ's heart.

If we live by the Beatitudes, many will treat us more generously. We know people who are merciful, and we are quick to show them mercy. When our hearts are clean, we can see God more clearly. Those who seek and create peace are considered by all to be children of God. They are not without trials and suffering, but they are blessed and happy. Christ calls us to store up treasures in heaven, spiritual blessings that cannot be taken away. Even if we experience difficulty, we will still receive the highest and greatest gift: the kingdom of heaven. †

## A Word From Pope Francis

**What must we do, Father?** Look, read the Beatitudes: that will do you good. If you want to know what you actually have to do, read Matthew chapter 25, which is the standard by which we will be judged. With these two things you have the action plan: the Beatitudes and Matthew 25. You do not need to read anything else. I ask you this with all my heart....But do not forget: make yourselves heard; take care of the two ends of life, the two ends of the history of peoples: the elderly and the young; and do not water down the faith.

—Morning Meditation,  
Chapel of the *Domus  
Sanctae Marthae*,  
July 25, 2013



### REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- In what areas of your life do you need to focus on living the Beatitudes?
- How can you show others they are creatures of God this week?



# The Beatitudes: An Overture to the Sermon on the Mount

By Leonard Foley, OFM

**A**n overture introduces and plays with various themes of the music to follow. A hint here, full promise there, a startling burst of color. So it is with the Beatitudes. They're the overture to the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew's Gospel, there are eight or nine, depending on how you count. They are explained in the sermon that comes after the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:13—7:29). Some Beatitudes would be unintelligible without the words of Jesus that follow.

As we look at the Beatitudes found in Matthew (as distinguished from those in Luke), we see a definite Jewish cast, written as they were for a predominantly Jewish Christian community. The Gospel is divided into five booklets, suggesting that this is the new Pentateuch, or Torah—the Law of Moses contained in the first five books of the Bible. Jesus is the new Moses, far outshining the former. As Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, so Jesus

goes up a mountain in Galilee to present his Beatitudes and teachings. Jesus' "commandments" go far beyond—but do not supplant—those given Moses.

The Beatitudes call up the picture of heroic saints, of incredible courage in suffering, total generosity to others. But we shy away from questioning these statements too closely. They are certainly not self-evident, and some people find them to be beyond human reach: "Of course you can't really run a business or a life on such principles!" we say. "They're just ideals, right? That's it! They're ideals for a favored few to follow." The Beatitudes haunt us. They are like the thorn in St. Paul's side. Are we ready to hear Jesus say, "Congratulations! You are blessed for being poor in spirit?" †

Source: *Catholic Update*, December 2013  
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## Reconciliation

By Dr. Shawn McCauley Welch

**S**elf-examination can be difficult. At times we may seem too busy. Saint Gertrude the Great, a German nun who entered the convent of Helfta at five years old, was often worried about the poor souls who didn't have enough time to pray, like the sisters who worked hard making things to sell to pay off the debts of the convent.

Gertrude brought these concerns before the Lord. He assured her that what he wanted most was their wills oriented to him. It didn't matter whether their labor was exterior or spiritual. He explained that if all he wanted was spiritual exercise, he would have changed

human bodily requirements after the fall. Instead, we were created with these bodily needs.

It may be tempting to say we can't be like Gertrude or other saints. We don't have enough time to reflect or pray. We have real work responsibilities, but we also have a responsibility to pray. Practicing regular self-examination along with prayer is important and will help us be devout in ordering our deeds and help ensure all of our service is oriented toward God. While those deeds, done lovingly, can be another form of prayer and worship, it is important to be in constant communication with God and not neglect prayer itself.

When we do find ourselves falling short, trapped in a hedge of thorns of our own making, we need to reach for the Lord's hand as Gertrude did. The sacrament of reconciliation is a good place for this.

When we grasp his hand and experience his mercy, we can heal and become more open to love. We become more whole, and thus we have more love to offer our neighbor. †

Source: *Liguorian*, April 2014  
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Lord, you dwell in the depth of my being. May your Spirit help me to seek and to know you with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength.

— From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,  
Rev. Warren J. Savage  
and Mary Ann McSweeney

## WEEKDAY READINGS

January 30–  
February 4

Mon. Weekday:  
Heb 11:32–40 / Mk 5:1–20

Tue. St. John Bosco:  
Heb 12:1–4 / Mk 5:21–43

Wed. Weekday:  
Heb 12:4–7, 11–15 / Mk 6:1–6

Thu. Presentation of the Lord:  
Mal 3:1–4 / Heb 2:14–18 / Lk 2:22–40

Fri. Weekday:  
Heb 13:1–8 / Mk 6:14–29

Sat. Weekday:  
Heb 13:15–17, 20–21 / Mk 6:30–34

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