

February 1, 2026

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Matthew 5:1-12a

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

Background:

Last week Jesus learned of the arrest of John the Baptist and moved from the small town of Nazareth to Capernaum, which was located on major trade routes, to begin his ministry of preaching and curing the sick. He also called his first disciples, Peter, his brother Andrew, and the two brothers James and John. In the two verses between last week’s text and the Gospel for this week, Matthew states that Jesus’ fame had spread throughout Syria and people were bringing their sick to him.

The Gospel for this week gives us the start of Jesus’ instruction to his disciples. That instruction will continue for the next few weeks, until the beginning of Lent. Jesus expects the disciples to learn from him and to shape their lives by his teachings. As Matthew describes Jesus’ instruction to his followers, he is drawing on his community’s familiarity with Moses, who went up the mountain and brought back the commandments from God. Here, Jesus takes his disciples up the mountain and sits with them, assuming the position of a teacher. But he is not laying down a new set of commandments, rather he teaches in the tradition of a wisdom teacher.

Each of the Beatitudes begins with same, “Blessed are...” The sense of the word here is not simple statement of reality nor some future hope. These are expressions of reality as it will be experienced in the fullness of the Kingdom of God. They are blessings that a community experiences as it lives the Kingdom of God. The blessed one then is not affected by the other circumstances of life. The blessing described in the beatitudes comes to the disciples out of a profound awareness that Jesus is walking with them and they are journeying with Jesus. This bond, like the covenant, continues no matter what circumstances the disciple might experience.

The values that Jesus advocates in the beatitudes run contrary to those held by society of his day. Throughout Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus is described as the one who is poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungering for righteousness, merciful, pure of heart, and a peacemaker. These beatitudes look to a future time when God’s presence will be brought to fullness on earth. That future day has begun to appear in the person of Jesus. Jesus teaches his followers, by the example of his own life, how to live their lives reflecting the values of the reign of God. Thus, hope for the reign of God will continue to be present and unfold in the world through his followers.

Reflection Questions:

1. What has been your experience of being coached or mentored? What has made some of those experiences better than others? What has made you a better student?
2. How do you think the disciples are thinking and feeling as Jesus takes them up the mountain? Do you think they are aware of Moses going up the mountain?
3. As the disciples climbed the mountain with Jesus, how might they have thought of themselves as being blessed?

4. How does Jesus' instruction challenge their understanding of what it is to be blessed?
5. How do you experience being blessed or being among the blessed? Is there a difference?
6. Who are the people who have reminded you that you are among those blessed?
7. How would you like to respond to God as you hear Jesus' instruction to his disciples in this text? Can you take some time to talk to God about your questions, thoughts, and desires?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fsc-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for February 1, 2026, the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth, who have observed his law;
seek justice, seek humility; perhaps you may be sheltered on the day of the Lord's anger.
But I will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly,
who shall take refuge in the name of the Lord: the remnant of Israel.
They shall do no wrong and speak no lies;
nor shall there be found in their mouths a deceitful tongue;
they shall pasture and couch their flocks with none to disturb them.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!
The Lord keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets captives free.
The Lord gives sight to the blind; the Lord raises up those who were bowed down.
The Lord loves the just; the Lord protects strangers.
The fatherless and the widow the Lord sustains, but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The Lord shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.*

Consider your own calling. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God. It is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord."

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

Excerpts from Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13; Psalm 146:6-10; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; and Matthew 5:1-12

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for February 1st, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. The Gospel from Matthew is the beginning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, which starts with the beatitudes. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," ... and the seven others that follow, concluding with "they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness." Like the poor in spirit, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The other readings have references to the humble and lowly, these being the remnant who will have refuge and peace in the name of the Lord, and good in place of discomfort, the lowly shaming those with plenty. In the first reading from Zephaniah, "Seek the Lord, all you humble; you may be sheltered on the day of the Lord's anger. The remnant shall do no wrong." Psalm 146 exclaims, "The Lord secures justice for the oppressed," and the response repeats the verse from the Gospel, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs." In the second reading, Paul writes to the Corinthians, "God chose the lowly and despised to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God. Due to him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us redemption."

In Jesus' words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, they who mourn, the meek, they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers, and they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness." "They will be comforted, inherit the land, be satisfied, be shown mercy, see God, and be called children of God. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He then tells the disciples, "Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!