



Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

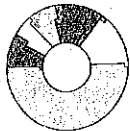
Focus: To hope in the Lord always.

Catechist's Context

The Beatitudes we hear in today's Gospel remind us that God is present even in the midst of suffering. This is a comfort to all of us. The Beatitudes also challenge us to adopt the attitudes of mercy and love that God offers to all. Even in the midst of our own struggles, we are called to treat others as Christ does.

Focus on Church Teaching

The Beatitudes offer us a way to understand the Kingdom of God that Jesus came to proclaim. They present in a concise way the happiness and liberation that God intends for all, especially the poor, the frail, the disabled, and the unprotected. Those who hear and follow the teachings of Jesus may gain freedom from temporal hardship and from the sins that cause oppression (NDC, 25). The Kingdom Jesus announces is not a territory of land but a participation in the eternal life of God (CCC, 1716-29).



Liturgical Calendar Connection

Help the children find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Point out what feast days are coming up this week. As a group, choose one saint to read more about (see pages vi-viii for more information about the saints). How did this saint live according to the Beatitudes?

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.**

Gospel Acclamation

Matthew 5:12a

Alleluia, alleluia.

Rejoice and be glad;
your reward will be great in heaven.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-12ab

Refer to page xi for citations to the standard Lectionary.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according
to Matthew.**

**When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the
side of a mountain and sat down.**

**Jesus' disciples gathered around him, and he
taught them:**

**"God blesses those people who depend only on
him. They belong to the kingdom of heaven!**

**"God blesses those people who grieve. They will
find comfort!**

**"God blesses those people who are humble.
The earth will belong to them!**

“God blesses those people who want to obey him more than to eat or drink. They will be given what they want!

“God blesses those people who are merciful. They will be treated with mercy!

“God blesses those people whose hearts are pure. They will see him!

“God blesses those people who make peace. They will be called his children!

“God blesses those people who are treated badly for doing right. They belong to the kingdom of heaven.

“God will bless you when people insult you, mistreat you, and tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of me. Be happy and excited! You will have a great reward in heaven.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

We Are Blessed

☉ What does it mean to be blessed?

Sometimes when someone sneezes, we say, “Bless you!” and we mean that we are asking God to keep that person from being sick. When we are making the Sign of the Cross with holy water coming into and going out of church, we are blessing ourselves. In this Sunday’s Gospel, when Jesus says, “God blesses,” he means that God takes care of that group of people. We hear about so many people whom God takes care of!

(The following is a reflection on Matthew 5:4. You might choose to focus on another Beatitude or discuss additional ones. Use the following structure to help you: reflect on who is blessed, how God blesses them, and what we can do to be more like those who are blessed.)

☉ What does it mean to grieve?

When we grieve, we are sad. We are sad because we have lost something or someone. Maybe you drew a beautiful picture, and then accidentally spilled juice on it and it was ruined; or maybe you grew out of your favorite pair of shoes and can’t wear them anymore because they are too small. Your best friend may have moved to another school or to a new house and you aren’t able to see your friend that often anymore. You may have lost someone close to you, like your grandparent who died.

☉ How does it feel when you’re sad?

You might have felt terrible in your heart. You might have cried. But those who love you help you to feel better because they want you to know you are loved even when you are sad.

☉ What did Jesus say happens to those who grieve?

Jesus says that those who grieve will find comfort. God gives us that comfort, just as your mom and dad or other loved ones help to make you feel better. God does this too, but through other people. God gives us special people in our lives to help us know we are loved and to help us feel better. God gives us our parents, our sisters and brothers, our friends, our pets, our teachers. Many people love us and can give us comfort.

☉ We can also give comfort to other people who are sad. How can we give comfort?

Everyone feels sad sometimes. We can be the special people who are gifts from God to help others feel loved and feel better. When a friend falls down and skins her knee, we can help her up, find help from an adult to get her knee washed and bandaged, and give her a hug so she’ll stop crying. When a brother or sister loses a favorite toy, we can share one of ours and play with it together. This is how we can give comfort to others.

Beatitudes Placemat

You will need legal-size construction paper or card stock and coloring materials to lead this activity. Identify a social service agency that provides food for those in need, such as a soup kitchen or residential health-care facility. Inquire with the agency and confirm whether it will accept your project.

Give the children a brief explanation of the agency you are working with. Let them know that we share God's love and comfort with others. Explain that they will be creating placemats for the people at the agency. They will draw pictures that remind them of God's love and comfort on the placemats. Tell the children to be as creative and inspiring as possible because they will bring smiles and comfort to the people as they eat their meal.

Circle of Blessing

Have the children sit in a circle on the floor. Invite children to name a blessing for which they are thankful. Begin by giving the children an example, such as "I am thankful to God that I am your teacher." Let the children begin their statements with: "I am thankful to God _____." Have the rest of the circle respond, "God, thank you for blessing us," after each one.

Beatitudes Circle Song

Teach the children the following song to the tune of "Twinkle, twinkle, little star."

*Jesus taught Beatitudes
Kind and loving attitudes
Caring, sharing, every day
Peace and fairness when we play
Jesus taught Beatitudes
Kind and loving attitudes*

Have the children join hands and move in a circle. As the circle revolves, sing the song together.

Living the Liturgy at Home

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Scripture Readings

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

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

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Matthew 5:1-12a

Prayer

Lord our God,
just as the rain comes down
to water the earth
and make it fruitful,
so you send forth your word
to do your will in the world.
May this wisdom from heaven
take root in our hearts
and bear fruit in holy words
and loving deeds.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Conversation Questions

- ⊙ How have you been blessed by God? How does God take care of you?
- ⊙ How can we share God's love and comfort with others?

Faith in Action

The Beatitudes call us to unite with those on the edges of our community, those who have no voice and are powerless, and those who suffer. This week, find an opportunity to comfort someone whom Jesus names as "blessed" in the Beatitudes. Consider donating gently used toys to a homeless shelter or serving together at a soup kitchen.

?? Did You Know?

... that in Matthew's Gospel we hear about Jesus climbing a mountain and teaching the Beatitudes? Luke writes about Jesus teaching the Beatitudes on a plain (a flat, open space). The difference in settings is due to the audiences the authors were writing for. Matthew wrote for the Jewish people, who believed one found God at the top of a mountain.