

The Forth Sunday Ordinary Time Year A, 2017 Mat 5: 1-12

God's Perfect Communication

The Beatitudes, or Beautiful Attitudes. Mother Church teaches, blessings are in essence sacramental. They are prayers, actions, or objects to assist individuals in receiving and communicating, grace from God. Through blessing we invoke God's favour, who makes holy our lives. While the word sacrament, is easily recognizable in its Latin origin, *sacramentum*, not as obvious, is that its Latin original, is imported from the Greek word *mysterion*, there from which English derives the word, mystery.

And in many ways, sacraments caress humankind's mysterious longing to gaze upon God, arousing even natural senses. Sacraments express physical, mental, and emotional elements, expecting in their practice to produce deeper self-awareness, and more meaningful divine encounters. They awaken the person by drawing the whole human further into the mystery of the Divine. Humanity, created with this impulse can well believe, that God in whose image we are created, similarly desires fully, although gradually to reveal God's self to us through sacrament and blessing.

Not necessarily then, do blessings give evidence of material prosperity? And today, God's perfect and Complete Communication delivers his famous sermon, we know as the "Beatitudes."

Throughout First Testament scriptures, particularly in the wisdom literature and psalms, we hear often, the term blessed. The Responsorial Psalm today, blessed are the poor in spirit, the kingdom of heaven is theirs! Favoured are the poor, who are indeed those without material possessions, but even more importantly, are those whose faith is directed in Spirit. Poor in this context is not a credit rating, as much as a measure of faithfulness. To be poor in spirit is to recognize, a deep longing, satisfied, only with what God provides. We cannot fill ourselves with life, and so do better to orient ourselves to the only Being who can. It is indeed an action of faith and one, no doubt, demanding a fair bit of humility! Not something that comes easy to human nature.

And then does our Lord really say, God's favour is upon the mourner, the meek, and the persecuted? Benediction to those who hunger and thirst for what is right and just? Who really stays behind to comfort, after the crowds have gone home? And are not the meek just bulldozed over by "The Man"? Get out there and assert yourself. Our Lord's well known sermon folks, has never needed, a more attentive audience, and a more banded group of subscribers, than in these very times.

A growing economic divide, a thriving culture of death, ever increasing loneliness, usually treated with addictions, the unemployed and underemployed, the hurting. And that's just here in our own community.

Political and social refugees, the world over, forced to leave home! Where, when, and who is blessed in all of that? Well certainly many can say; "blessed are we" and probably should with increased frequency. Perhaps by acknowledging our own blessings, it may become clearer, not everyone is so favoured.

To whom is the one do all these blessings befall? Isaiah, Chapter 61, answers: The Lord has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to comfort all who morn, to place on those who morn in Zion, a diadem instead of ashes. To give them oil of gladness in place of morning, a glorious mantle instead of a listless spirit. The Lord has sent me to comfort. And the Lord has sent you. God interacts in these affairs, expecting humankind's, willing and joyfully engagement. They who morn will indeed be comforted, because of God's inexhaustible faithfulness in humanity, even when at times our own faith is weak and compromised!

Land and sea supports all life on this planet and where crowded plurality and diverse interest intersect, conflict often follows. Nowhere is this more evident, than in Jerusalem itself! I remember my last visit to that city, being escorted by Israeli military, through what looked like an angry political rally. I was staying just outside the old city, in the Arab quarter. Very tight and crowded are these places for a free roaming Canadian boy.

And so the meek will inherit the land? From what I could tell, most of that land couldn't grow a turnip. But of course, Jesus isn't talking about real estate in his sermon; He is instead speaking of a true homeland. A kingdom build within human hearts, sacramentally living as members of the Church, with God their supreme ruler.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. What is righteousness, if not our obedience and sacramental response to, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". Just as John submitted and aligned with Jesus' request for baptism in the Jordan, righteousness begs of us, that we upload our will onto God's hard drive.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. How, Jesus answers from his deep awareness of Psalm, 42, which asks, "Where is your God? Come then friends and wash yourselves often in the waters of your Baptism where you are cleansed and made better able to see God. Like cleaning your glasses, sign yourselves each time you enter and leave this worship space, with holy baptismal water, that you might always see Jesus, whether you are entering or exiting.

Blessed are the peacemakers, called children of God! Our name is deeply connected to our identity. In most cultures naming children is a right belonging almost exclusively to parents.

There's no internal or external confusion when know, and believe we are children of God. Too many in our world today suffer from this loss of identity, having abandoned belief, that we are above all, children made by, and in the image and likeness of God. Instead of behaving as competitors for God's affection, imagining somehow, God could run short of love and care. Do you suppose communities might look differently if sisters and brothers, worked together to communicate Christ; the only path to lasting peace! Could we be more effective peace partners in marriage, family life, or in our vocation as single people?

Sisters and Brothers, as elusive as it has been to bring about fully our Lord's teaching today, the great news is that with Sacrament, Blessings and Grace, of which Mother Church is custodian, the benedictions of God never cease. Jesus enabled us with a blueprint, from which, to create a beautiful attitude, that our lives might adorn the kingdom of God. Blessings indeed to all chosen and anointed to walk, in the power of The Holy Spirit.

Amen