

## Read

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

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

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Matthew 5:1-12a

## Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 1, 2026



### REFLECTION

The Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel offer a profound challenge to worldly standards of success by highlighting qualities like humility, meekness, and mercy as pathways to God's kingdom. In a world often obsessed with material wealth and self-interest, the Beatitudes call us to embrace simplicity, hunger for righteousness, and work for peace.

Instead of emphasizing just one virtue, Jesus chose to address the crowds by giving them a list of qualities that might sometimes seem to contradict one another (for example, consider the possible tension between those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and those who are meek and are peacemakers). The diversity of the Beatitudes affirms that holiness may look different in different people and in different situations. There are many paths to a virtuous life.

These teachings are not just moral ideals; they're also an invitation to prioritize spiritual virtues, align our hearts with God's character, and actively seek justice and humility in our lives.

Let us internalize these words and embody the spirit of the Beatitudes, finding true blessing in selfless service, humility, and a deep connection with God. May we become bearers of God's blessing in a world in need of grace and transformation.



### ACTION

Pick one of the Beatitudes and resolve to put it into action this week. Or, you could challenge yourself to put into practice a different Beatitude each day. For example, you can be a peacemaker by seeking common ground with someone you have been in conflict with. You could practice mercy by forgiving someone who has wronged you. At the end of each day, spend time in prayer reflecting on how it felt to live out that Beatitude.



Watch "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" (2019) for some inspiration on living a humble life.

### ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do the Beatitudes challenge the world's understanding of happiness and success?
- ❖ Which Beatitude challenges you the most? How might you work toward embodying it in your life?



# February 1, 2026

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### LECTIONARY #70A

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

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

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Matthew 5:1-12a

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

Jesus begins his teaching in Matthew's Gospel on a mountain with what is often referred to as the Sermon on the Mount. Not only are mountains typical places for divine encounters, Matthew also uses this location to draw a parallel between Jesus and Moses. Because Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai in the Old Testament, here is Jesus now giving a new but authentic interpretation of the laws of God that guide our actions. Jesus is greater than Moses and his teaching is one with authority, as he himself is divine and is not just handing on what God communicates. He teaches us a way of life that will lead us to the kingdom of heaven.

**Q FOCUS:** *The Beatitudes describe the Christian way of life Jesus is calling us to.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

February 2 marks the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord which commemorates the event in Luke's Gospel of Mary and Joseph bringing the infant Jesus to the temple, following the prescriptions of Jewish law. There they encounter Simeon and Anna who recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Simeon remarks on the way that Jesus will be a light to the world, giving rise to the tradition of the Church blessing candles

on this day as well as the popular name for the celebration: Candlemas.

### Church Teaching Connection

"Let us pay attention to this fact: the reason behind the Beatitudes is not a current situation, but rather the new condition that the blessed receive as a gift from God. . . . [W]hat does the word 'blessed' mean? Because each of the eight Beatitudes begins with the word 'blessed'. The original term does not mean one with a full belly or one who is doing well, but rather it is a person who is in a condition of grace, who progresses in God's grace and progresses on God's path: patience, poverty, service to others, comfort. . . . Those who advance in these things are happy and shall be blessed" (Pope Francis, General Audience, January 29, 2020).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel

Matthew 5:1-12a

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

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

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."

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

Today's reading follows shortly after last week's reading. Jesus is just beginning his public ministry and he has drawn great crowds from all over. So, he goes up a mountain to teach them. In the Bible, mountains are often places of encounter with God and of divine revelation. The Beatitudes we hear today are some of the first teachings that we get from Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, and they can be some of the most difficult to understand.

► **What do you think your initial reaction to the Beatitudes would be if you were hearing them for the first time?**

The word beatitude means supreme blessedness or happiness. It not only describes these sayings, but it is also used in our tradition to talk about our final end in God, our eternal beatitude when we will praise God in his presence for all eternity. Jesus begins his ministry by teaching his followers who will be blessed in the kingdom of heaven. As we know, the people who Jesus says are blessed are not

those who we might initially call to mind. We might say that those who have a lot of worldly possessions are blessed, but Jesus says the "poor in spirit" are; in other words, those who are detached from earthly things so that they might stand humbly before God are the ones who will obtain heaven.

► **How do you think the other Beatitudes (those who mourn, who are meek, and so on) bring us closer to heaven? How can we view these things as blessings from God?**

Jesus presents some hard truths in these Beatitudes. They are not at all the way the world, then or now, thinks of being blessed. They are not pleasant and are uncomfortable, and some are even dangerous situations. For these Beatitudes to be some of the first teachings that we get from Jesus really sets up the paradox of his whole life and what he will accomplish in his paschal mystery. Jesus, the Son of God who is truly human and truly divine, will suffer and die and be raised from the dead and ascend into heaven. This is the paschal mystery. In the Beatitudes, he is letting us know that, like him, we will face suffering and loss in this world. God redeems these sufferings for his glory and remains faithful to us. When we remain faithful to him by placing our trust in him, we gain new life and are welcomed into his eternal life.

► **How is a lifestyle modeled on the Beatitudes—that is, the Christian life, countercultural in today's world?**

In our modern world, we want to be able to find all the answers quickly and be presented with easy solutions when we search the internet. We seek concrete answers and scientific explanations. These are helpful and can be positive solutions to challenges we face. However, the Beatitudes call us to a deeper way of living. When we adopt this way of life, we are more often than not going against the prevailing culture around us and following what Jesus tells us to do, not what the world tells us to do. It is certainly challenging to remain faithful to them, but in today's Gospel, Jesus reassures us of God's blessing and invitation to eternal life.

## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 128.

**"Beatitude" means supremely blessed.**

**The Beatitudes are countercultural.**

**The Christian life is shaped by the Beatitudes.**

## Act on the Word

### This or That?

For this activity, you will need a "This or That" list; you can find these online or create your own with the help of the teens. You will also need to have two sheets of paper, one saying "This" and one saying "That," and tape.

Before today's gathering, prepare a "This or That" list by finding one (or ideas for entries) online. Choose "This or That" items that are suitable for your group (for example, coffee or tea, morning person or night owl, introvert or extrovert, and so on). You can also work with the teens to create these choices. Your list should have about ten to twenty this/that entries. Once the list is complete, prepare the space so that teens can move freely from one side to the other. Move chairs out of the way and tape a sign on each side of the room, one saying "This" and the other saying "That." Then, begin the game.

Explain to the teens that you will call out the choices and they will have to quickly decide which one they prefer. They make their choice known by moving to one side of the room or the other. The first option you call out will be the "This" and the teens who choose it should go to the appropriate side of the room. The second option you call out will be the "That" and teens should go to that side of the room. Having explained the rules, you can now begin to play.

Read off the first this/that entry on your list and wait for the teens to move to the side of the room

that represents their choice. Have teens talk with those who chose the same item as them. They should come up with two or three reasons why their "this" or "that" is the better choice. This is not a debate, so encourage the teens to have fun and be creative. Have a speaker from each side share the side's reasons. If you would like, you can pick a "winner"—which group made the better argument? Once each side has spoken, call out the next this/that pair and continue with the activity until all items have been called. This is not only a fun activity, but it is also a way for teens to meet others who have similar interests.

To close the activity, lead the teens in a brief discussion about the challenges that they face when having to choose to do something that is more mainstream or to do something that might be countercultural and is grounded in their faith. Remind them that these choices matter a great deal, more than the choices they might have made in the This or That game. Encourage them to choose Christ this week and spend time praying with the Beatitudes.

### Closing Prayer

O God,  
you have taught us your laws  
and have given us a way of life  
that leads to you.  
Help us to see in them your wisdom  
and truth,  
and strengthen us to persevere in our faith.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

### For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.