

4TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Chapters five, six and seven of the Gospel of Matthew are known as the Sermon of the Mount. In the Sermon on the Mount Matthew portrays Jesus as a true Teacher and interpreter of the Law of Moses.

Today's gospel reading begins the Sermon on the Mount. In the reading Jesus presents us with eight beatitudes. The term "Beatitude" comes from the Latin word "*beatus*" which refers to a state of great joy, happiness, blessed, fortunate, or favored.

It is said that the word "Beatitude" was used to commend those who took a certain path of life. It was also used to promise future consolation to those in affliction. So Jesus in the beatitudes identifies the fundamental attitudes and characteristics of a true disciple and praises a disciple who takes this path of discipleship as truly happy. He also encourages a disciple who is suffering as he follows this path. **(Reference: Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew*).**

By giving us the beatitudes today the Church wants to encourage us to continue to exhibit these fundamental attitudes in our lives as Christians.

As Christians we need to depend on God; to be poor in spirit. All of us must put our trust in God because our material endowments, achievements or experiences alone cannot guarantee our everlasting security.

Again, as Christians we need to turn to God in our despair, for he is a sure source of our strength and comfort. We should not forget to turn to the Lord in our sorrows and disappointments. And in the face of hardship and adversity let us be trustful towards God. Let us be meek.

Also, as Christians we need to continue to have the desire to live in full accordance with God's uprightness. Let us always seek to be just and fair in all our dealings.

What again, we are encouraged to have a compassionate attitude towards those in difficulties. We also have to forgive generously.

Furthermore, we are being reminded today to love God with undivided heart; clean of heart. Our external act of faith must reflect our inward attitude of a pure heart.

The last but one underlying attitude that we are to portray is striving to bring about harmony with others, to seek to unite those who are estranged from one another in society; to be peacemakers. We must by determined acts of goodness bring about understanding and harmony.

The final fundamental attitude we should show as Christians according to today's gospel reading, is readiness to face persecution. For if we act in accordance with God's character; showing love, mercy, justice and peace we will know persecution because our position might be seen by others who have different stance as a threat to their personal interest.

In short, what the Church would like us to know today is that if we depend on God and remain faithful to him by standing always for the cause of right we may have the inner satisfaction and blessing of knowing that we are doing the will of God and enjoy it fully one day with him in heaven.

As the first reading tells us let us continue to seek the Lord in humility and justice and observe his law and we will be sheltered on the day of the Lord's anger. And as St Paul invites us to do in the second reading let us reflect always on our choice to follow the Lord to see if we have true attitudes that can make us boast in the Lord.