

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14 - *I had a vision of a great multitude... from every nation, race, people & tongue.*

Responsorial Psalm 24 "Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face."

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: 1 John 3:1-3 – *Beloved, we are God's children now ... one day we shall see God as God is.*

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-16 - *You are the light of the world.*

[Peter] 🎵 We are the light of the world, may our light shine before all  
That they may see the good that we do and give glory to God. 🎵

What are the rules we Christians are given to live by? I'll give you a hint - think of the Gospel you just heard.

That Gospel passage is from today's Feast of All Saints. It includes what we call the 8 Beatitudes.

They are the summary of the teachings of Jesus, the **headline** of the Bible.

They are a description of the way he lived & the way he wants his followers to live. Do *you* know them by heart?

Many church-going people can list the 10 commandments, **but** the Gospel goes farther than they do.

A good Jew must live the 10 commandments. Maybe even any person of good will should.

But to be a disciple of Christ – I must live the **BE-ATTITUDES**, they are the attitudes of Jesus and his true disciples.

The commandments given through Moses are necessary, **but** not sufficient for living as a disciple of Christ.

The beatitudes are *invitations* to live lives of love & mercy – to be Christ for others in today's world.

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[Anna] They are not always easy to understand & accept, but you know what they mean, if you know the prayer we call the Our Father. In a way, the Lord's Prayer is the Reader's Digest condensed summary of the Beatitudes. So today, for each beatitude we have an animal who will tell us about how **that** Beatitude is connected to the Lord's Prayer.

**1 Fran the Finch** is our image for the **1<sup>st</sup> BEATITUDE**:

**"Blessed are the poor in spirit, the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs."**

To be poor the way Jesus meant it is to turn to God & admit my limits, my powerlessness, [my poverty]

& to receive what I need & who I am from God. The poor in spirit feel indebted but **not** entitled.

To live this beatitude is to have the **wisdom** to know that I am poor without God.

**Fran** remembers the words of Jesus, "Do not worry what to wear or eat; look at the birds and the flowers of the field."

This beatitude challenges a **Lie** our culture puts forth – that we can make it without God or each other:

A lie that leads to the attitude that greed is good.

The **1<sup>st</sup>** beatitude encourages the **Gospel Values** of humility & surrender.

**Fran's** response to this beatitude, is to say, from the heart, **"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name,"**  
praying to a God who cares for the earth and all its creatures. Saying **OUR** Father, not just **MY** Father.  
because we go to God together or not at all

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**2 [Peter] Chris the Seal** is our image for the **2<sup>nd</sup> BEATITUDE**,

**"Blessed are they who mourn, they shall be comforted."** [My name is Chris. That's short for Christian; I'm an endangered species]

To mourn in the *Gospel* sense is to grieve the pain I experience, like the death of someone I love, **but** also to mourn the evil in the world, the wrong which causes others pain & the evil in the world that hurts so many people.

The comfort comes after I let myself feel the pain. This beatitude gives us permission to feel. To feel not only sadness or depression, **but** even anger & frustration. We are called to feel angry enough at evil - in ourselves or in the world - to change it.

The **Lie** revealed by this beatitude is that we must avoid the pain of being connected to others by love.

This beatitude encourages the **Gospel Value** of empathy with others who have experienced loss or who have suffered oppression.

When **Chris** the seal hears this beatitude - Chris responds with the prayer: **"Thy kingdom come... on earth as in heaven."** I pray that prayer when I see how far we have to go to become the kingdom of God, & when I look inside & grieve that God does not always sit on the throne of my heart.

Gospel Mourning is about taking action to welcome God's reign inside & building the kingdom of God around us. It is truly an example of **"Good Grief."**

**3 Harry the Horse** is our image for the **3<sup>rd</sup> BEATITUDE** - **"Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the earth"**

To be **meek** is to be like Jesus. It does NOT mean to be weak, even though it rhymes. Meekness is strength under control. The word in Greek is one used in horse training. A horse is made **"meek"** when it does everything the rider asks it to do - like in a steeplechase or dressage. Jesus was **"meek"** as if he were a horse ridden by the Holy Spirit.

So we become as free as a good horse when we seek & respond to the will of God in our lives. I have learned, & keep on learning that I can't do everything I want to do, **but** I can do everything God wants me to do, if only I let the Spirit lead me.

The Lie revealed by this beatitude is that I can do it my way; that my will is supreme.

The Gospel Value I am encouraged to follow is discernment & obedience to God's will.

When our friend **Harry** hears that beatitude, he understands perfectly - & he prays

**"Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."**

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**4 [Anna] Bobbie the Bear** is our image for the **4<sup>th</sup> BEATITUDE**

**"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for holiness, they shall be filled."**

Holiness is a way of combining two ideas - both of which are part of the meaning of the Greek word in the Gospel and the Aramaic word Jesus used.

Blessed are those who hunger for **righteousness** [a personal relationship with God] and thirst for **justice** [a right relationship with the rest of the people of the world, with those God loves].

There is a Native American story about this beatitude. The original story talks about wolves, but we have adapted it by referring to another wild animal, a bear.

An old Cherokee Grandfather is talking with his grandson who is angry with his friend. He tells him, "I have struggled with anger many times. It is as if there are two bears living inside me. One is good and does no harm, but the other is full of anger. He fights everyone all the time, for no reason. Sometimes it is hard to live with these two inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit." The boy looks intently into his grandfather's eyes and asks, "Which one will win this battle in your heart?" The grandfather smiles and quietly says, "The one I feed."

If we hunger and thirst for holiness, rather than security or control or revenge, we are feeding the bear that does good and uses its strength to bring justice and peace. Then, we become what we eat.

We are invited & called to hunger & thirst for God, as much as the **METS** & **KANSAS CITY** were hungry to win the *World Series*.

The **Lie** challenged by this beatitude is that our hunger will be satisfied when we have power & possessions, or that might makes right. The **Gospel Value** Jesus is proclaiming is that holiness = righteousness + justice.

And **Bobbie** the bear prays, **"Give us this day our daily bread."**

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**5 [Peter] Danny the Dog** is our image for the **5<sup>th</sup> BEATITUDE**: **"Blessed are the merciful, they shall receive mercy".**

Which phrase in the Lord's Prayer do you think of when you hear that? [forgive us as we forgive others]

I believe that forgiveness is **ALWAYS** God's work. But I also believe that to forgive is what makes us truly human, in the best sense - human as Christ modeled humanity. Forgiveness is what makes us most like Christ, and Christ is the model for all that is truly human. I get upset when someone says, "I'm only human" as an explanation for hurting someone else. When I do evil, it is a sign that I have forgotten how to be human.

Yet to be human as Christ is, is to let God's spirit guide me & work in me. Forgiveness is still what God does in us, through us & sometimes in spite of us.

The **Lie** challenged by this beatitude is that to forgive shows weakness & encourages evil; to forgive is **not** to excuse.

The **Gospel Value** Jesus is proclaiming is **Mercy & Forgiveness**.

**Danny** prays: "***forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.***"

I remember how I was invited to live this beatitude and entered into a process of forgiveness

I was at a morning mission Mass and the Friar who was giving the mission with me was preaching. The theme that day was the mercy of God. As he was doing the homily, a woman walked into the church talking loudly. She was rude, she was obnoxious and she was disruptive. I got very angry inside. She quieted down, but I was still seething.

Then we came to the greeting of peace, shortly after the words of the Our Father, "*forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" I knew that the reason the greeting of peace comes at this time of the Mass is because of those words, and I could hear the Lord speaking in my heart, "*You have to go to her, Peter, and wish her peace.*" But I was still mad, so I fought with the Lord, "*No way, José, I can't say 'Peace be with you' and mean it. I want to boot her out of the church!*"

I have found that if you fight with God long enough, God wins, so I prayed to know what to do – and remembered what St. Francis used to say before he preached in the city. Finally, I went to the disruptive woman, looked her in the eye and used the words Francis often spoke, "*The **Lord** give you peace.*" I was still unable to say, "Peace be with you" and mean it, but I knew that Jesus could bless her with peace even before I was ready. Within a few minutes, I too felt the peace of Christ in my heart.

I was following a pattern of prayer I often use: I can't, You, Lord, can, I think I'll let you.

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6 **[Anna] Eddie the Eagle** is our image for the 5<sup>th</sup> **BEATITUDE**, "***Blessed are the pure of heart, they shall see God***".

The blessing is **not only** to see God, but to **see as God sees**. To be pure of heart **is** to have the grace to see what is most important, & to consider everything else a distraction. It means to put first things first, to choose life, to let go of whatever gets in God's way. To remain centered on God. To see from God's point of view."

The **Lie** challenged by this beatitude is that **I have all the answers**.

The **Gospel Value** Jesus is proclaiming is vision clarified by God's truth; interior growth that leads to service.

And **Eddie** prays, "***Lead us not into temptation,***" or even better, "***Do not abandon us to temptation.***"

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7 **[Peter] Willie the Wolf** is our image for the 7<sup>th</sup> **BEATITUDE**,

***"Blessed are the Peacemakers, they shall be called the children of God."***

St. Francis was a peacemaker. He invited the Sultan to faith rather than leading a crusade to kill him.

He forbade his followers in the third order, the ancestor of the Secular Franciscan Order, to bear arms in the petty feudal wars which he knew about all too well, since he had been a prisoner of war for a year.

The story of how St. Francis tamed the wolf of Gubbio is a perfect illustration of how to be a peacemaker. St. Francis collaborated with the wolf to build peace in the town. In the end, even natural enemies – like the wolf and the sheep – became friends.

The **Lie** challenged by this beatitude is the illusion of "redemptive violence" – the lie we are so often told that violence will overcome violence.

The **Gospel Value** Jesus is proclaiming is peace – not so much pacifism as non-violent action. The redemptive suffering of Jesus is a radiant image of how he was and is a peacemaker.

**Willie** prays: "***Deliver us from evil or deliver us from the evil one.***"

In that prayer, he is asking the Father to tame the violence within.

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8 [Anna] **Sam the Skunk** is our image for the 8<sup>th</sup> BEATITUDE,

**“Blessed are those who are Persecuted for holiness’ sake, the kingdom of heaven is theirs”:**

Persecution is a kind of judgment from outside us.

If no one ever gets uncomfortable with what we say or how we live, we may not be living the Gospel.

This beatitude says that the Gospel **both** comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable.

This beatitude is another way of saying the first one.

The **Lie** challenged by this beatitude is that winning is everything.

The **Gospel Value** Jesus is proclaiming: Courage.

This beatitude brings the first beatitude full circle. Both promise the **Kingdom of Heaven will be theirs**.

In the first the promise is given to those who are **now living it – in the present moment**

The 8<sup>th</sup> is a promise of **HOPE in God’s sustaining power**.

**Sam** prays: **“For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory now & forever. Amen”**.

The Beatitudes are facets of one diamond, strands of one web.

Which one is your favorite? Which scares you?

If I live one of them fully, ~I am probably living the rest as well.

~If you know the Lord’s Prayer, you know the Beatitudes

~ If you are living the Lord’s Prayer, you are living the Beatitudes.

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[Peter] How do we live as the children of God we are? We put God & others first.

We admit we need God in our lives, & we need each other to follow God’s call.

We let the attitudes of Jesus - the ones described in the beatitudes - transform who we are and what we do. Some businesses are even realizing that living these attitudes are not only good for people, they are good for business. The end of the Gospel reading is about our call to be saints, to be the light of the world.

And the map for going towards that goal is the Beatitudes. This is one way they have been set to music:



Fr Peter & Sr Anna blessing graduates at the Lutheran Church

♪ REJOICE AND BE GLAD! BLESSED ARE YOU, HOLY ARE YOU.

REJOICE AND BE GLAD! YOURS IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

Blest are they, the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of God.

Blest are they, full of sorrow, they shall be consoled.

Blest are they, the lowly ones, they shall inherit the earth.  
Blest are they who hunger and thirst, they shall have their fill.

Blest are they who show mercy, mercy shall be theirs.  
Blest are they the pure of heart, they shall see God.

Blest are they who seek peace; they are the children of God.  
Blest are they who suffer in faith, the glory of God is theirs. 🎵