

## 4th SUNDAY YEAR A



*How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven!*

Today's readings tell us what we need to follow Christ and become more like him. Getting our priorities right in God's eyes may not be easy, nor is it always the way of the world, but it will bring happiness in God's kingdom.

At the beginning of his Sermon on the Mount (**Gospel: Mt 5,1-12**), Jesus teaches the Beatitudes, which focus on the qualities he expects his disciples to have. They are not 'rules' like the commandments, more a road map for discipleship, laying out the way to follow him. Jesus is calling us to learn what it really means to be 'glad and rejoice' – in him alone.

The Beatitudes are a restatement of the values mentioned in the **First Reading** **Zephaniah 2,3; 3: 12-13**

The Lord will protect those living honest and just lives: people of integrity and humility.



**The Psalmist (Ps146:6-7,89,9-10)** sings of the Lord's faithfulness and kindness, praising God for his care of 'those who are oppressed': the hungry, the imprisoned, the blind and the stranger.

(**Second Reading 1Cor 1:26-3**, St Paul reminds the Corinthians why they have been chosen by God. Their gift of faith is entirely due to God's generosity: in God they have found wisdom, holiness and freedom.

*This week, we may pray to recognise all the blessings the Lord has given us, so that we might walk more closely with Jesus in his work, just as he walks with us in our lives. (St. Bueno's Outreach Programme)*





## Reflection from Pope Francis

**Today's Gospel** manifests God's desire to lead us to happiness. But in this preaching of his, Jesus follows a particular path: One starts from a condition of hardship in order to open oneself to God's gift and enter the new world, the "Kingdom" announced by Jesus. This is a way of life in following the Lord, through which the reality of hardship and affliction is seen in a new perspective and experienced

according to the conversion that comes about. One is not *blessed* if one is not *converted*, capable of appreciating and living God's gifts.

I pause on the first Beatitude: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!*" (v. 3). The poor in spirit is **the one** who has assumed the feelings and attitudes of those poor people who know how to be humble, meek, open to God's grace. The happiness of the poor — of the poor in spirit — has a twofold dimension: with regard to *riches* and with regard to *God*. With regard to possessions, to material possessions, this poverty in spirit is sobriety: not necessarily sacrifice, but the ability to savour the essence, to share; the ability to renew every day the wonder at the goodness of things, without being weighed down in the obscurity of voracious consumption. The more I have, the more I want; the more I have, the more I want: this is voracious consumption. This kills the soul. Men or women who do this are not happy and will not attain happiness. With regard to God, it is praising and recognizing that the world is a blessing and that at its origin is the creative love of the Father.

The poor in spirit is the Christian who does not rely on himself, on material wealth, who is not obstinate in his own opinions, but who listens with respect and willingly defers to the decisions of others. If in our communities there were more of the poor in spirit, there would be fewer divisions, disagreements and controversies! Humility, like charity, is an essential virtue for living together in Christian communities. The poor, in this evangelical sense, appear to be those who keep alive the objective of the Kingdom of Heaven, offering a glimpse of it revealed as a seed in the fraternal community which favours sharing over ownership. Always having the heart and hands *open*. When the heart is *closed* it is a shrunken heart. It doesn't even know how to love. When the heart is *open*, it is on the path of love.

May the Virgin Mary, model and first fruit of the poor in spirit because she is wholly docile to the Lord's will, help us to surrender ourselves to God, rich in mercy, so that we may be filled with his gifts, especially the abundance of his forgiveness.



