

# FAITH CIRCLES

WEEKLY SMALL  
GROUP CATECHESIS

4TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A



## SUNDAY GOSPEL

### *Be-attitudes*

*Matthew 5:1-12*

Seeing the crowds, he went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples.

Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

'How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God.

Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.' ■

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

*Fr Paul Maunder OCD*

Coming from the lips of Matthew's Jesus, these words that at first glance seem to promise nothing consoling in this world, nevertheless are strangely and deeply consoling! Worldly politicians would never make such promises, for fear they would lose their followers! But with Jesus's majestic words it is different. They impart truth and life. Untold numbers have begun to live new lives by taking his words to heart, while others, once sad, have found life and consolation in a new 'be-attitude' to life.

As they become one's rule of life, the Beatitudes impart new joy and peace into the soul. They are in fact the rule of life Jesus himself lived. Hence, he speaks of them with profound personal conviction. The world, however good the things it offers, cannot give this precise kind of peace and joy.

As St Teresa of Avila puts it in her usual inimitable way, there is no 'yes' and 'no' about this peace and joy; all is 'yes', meaning this joy and peace will never be taken away from those who possess it. Such is the paradox of divine gifts in this world. Let us live as Jesus lived. ■

## FROM POPE FRANCIS

Peacemaking is an important be-attitude for all Christians. Pope Francis, in his message for the World Day of Peace suggests that: “To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence. [This] teaching “is realistic because it takes into account that in the world there is *too much* violence, *too much* injustice, and therefore that this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with *more* love, with *more* goodness.

This ‘more’ comes from God”. He went on to stress that: “For Christians, nonviolence is not merely tactical behaviour but a person’s way of being, the attitude

of one who is *so convinced of God’s love and power* that he or she is not afraid to tackle evil with the weapons of love and truth alone. Love of one’s enemy constitutes the nucleus of the ‘Christian revolution’. The Gospel command to *love your enemies* “is rightly considered the *magna carta* of Christian nonviolence. It does not consist in succumbing to evil..., but in responding to evil with good, and thereby breaking the chain of injustice”.

“The Jubilee of Mercy that ended in November encouraged each one of us to look deeply within and to allow God’s mercy to enter there. The Jubilee taught us to realize how many and diverse are

the individuals and social groups treated with indifference and subjected to injustice and violence. They too are part of our “family”; they too are our brothers and sisters. The politics of nonviolence have to begin in the home and then spread to the entire human family. “Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practise the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures that break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness”.

*Pope Francis – Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1 2017.*

## TALKING POINTS

1. In what ways have you experienced the Beatitudes, listed in today’s gospel, as true in your life, or give hope to your life. In what ways do they comfort or challenge you?
2. Peacemaking is central to the vision of the Beatitudes. In what ways has peacemaking and nonviolence played a part in your life? What are some of the ‘simple daily gestures’ of peace which you could take on board?

## PRAYER POINTS

**Pray for each other:** Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members.

Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them.

**Response:** *Lord Jesus, guide our feet on the way of peace.*

**Reflect:** Fr Paul writes: “as they become one’s rule of life, the Beatitudes impart new joy and peace into the soul.” Spend some time with Jesus asking him how one or two of the Beatitudes could become a ‘rule of life’ bringing you joy and peace.

**Closing Prayer:** Loving Father, you call us to be united together through the bonds of love and peace. Strengthen us in your love that we may be people who give example to the vision of the Beatitudes in all we do and say. Amen.

