



**Sunday 1 February 2026**

**4th Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Word of God Sunday**

Dear Parish Family,

Parents will be rejoicing this week, together with their children probably, that school goes back this week. Hopefully they have all had a wonderful holiday together without too many conflicts, challenges or bored moments, and are ready to return refreshed. There comes a point in every long school holiday where it becomes clear 'it's time to go back to school'. This past week our school staffs returned, and with a high level of excitement and hope I haven't seen for a while. Probably the school staffs don't think the holidays are long enough and parents think they are too long. I haven't noticed that this year. I am, with them, excited for the year ahead. So many opportunities for working collaboratively as a parish, with what I say is our most important ministry for the future.

There are good reasons that Catholic families choose to send their children to be educated in non-Catholic systems. If your choice is about money and affordability, please touch base with me so we can talk about it. Money should never exclude a child from Catholic education. Work and study visas can be tricky, but it's still worth a conversation as well.

I am biased obviously in favour of Catholic education! It is not by accident that they are agencies of hope. Our principals are highly skilled faith leaders and we have the best. I am not sure we celebrate them enough in their leadership, however I know we work hard as a parish to find ways to support them, and to help them in their ministry as faith leaders working with all our school staffs. The 'Call to Serve' Mass, where the bishop was the main celebrant on Thursday night, and in which our staffs are commissioned, is an opportunity as a local church to pray for and be present with our teachers and school communities.

Through the course of this coming year there will be other opportunities for our church, and in particular this parish, to support our schools and families. We, the members of our Sunday communities, have great skills in building bridges and being missionaries for and with the generations coming behind us. You are invited to take those opportunities and to accept the invitations you will receive through the year to be present when our school communities gather in our churches or celebrate liturgies in the schools. I am working on a couple of challenges with school gates (how we sign in and out) so we can access on days like ANZAC day, where the wider parish community can attend; they are challenges which won't necessarily prevent us from being present.

Late last year in his Apostolic letter 'DRAWING NEW MAPS OF HOPE' (October 2025) Pope Leo XIV, on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Conciliar Declaration of Vatican II 'Gravissimum educationis' (The supreme importance of education), reminds the church universally, and all of us missioning in local communities, of the importance of education, and Catholic education particularly, as a vessel for transformation and evangelisation. *'Where educational communities allow themselves to be guided by the word of Christ, they do not retreat but are revitalized; they do not build walls, but bridges ... ... ... because the Gospel does not grow old but makes "all things new" (Rev 21:5)'.*

**Greg, Parish Priest**

## The Parish Diary...(for the week ahead)

4th week in Ordinary Time, Year A/2

Mon 2 Feb *The Presentation of the Lord*

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

Tues 3 Feb

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Stockton (anointing)

Wed 4 Feb

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral (*Commissioning of Maitland Newcastle St Vincent de Paul Central Council President*)

9:00am Mass @ Mayfield West

Thurs 5 Feb *St Agatha, virgin, martyr*

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Stockton

9:30am St Francis Xavier's College Opening Mass in the School Hall

2:00pm Mass at Irwin Hall, Mayfield

Fri 6 Feb *St Paul Miki and companions, martyrs*

10:15am Mass @ The Junction (anointing)

11:00am Exposition, Adoration & Reconciliation @ The Cathedral

12:05pm Mass @ The Cathedral

Sat 7 Feb

9:15am Mass @ The Cathedral, followed by the Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, followed by Reconciliation

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sat 7 Feb

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ The Cathedral

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ The Junction

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ Mayfield West

Sun 8 Feb

7:30am Mass @ St Mary's

8:00am Mass @ Tighes Hill

9:00am Mass @ Stockton

9:30am Mass @ The Cathedral \*

11:00am Italian Mass @ The Junction

12noon Polish Mass @ The Cathedral

5:00pm Mass @ The Cathedral

\* Livestreamed on the Cathedral's YouTube channel - search Sacred Heart Cathedral Hamilton

## Next Week's Readings



5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Is 58:7-10

1 Cor 2:1-5

Mt 5:13-16

## Prayer Requests



**RECENTLY DECEASED:** Nora Eyre, Jeannie McDonald, Carol Bailey

**ANNIVERSARIES:** James Fingleton, Caitlin Potts, Jean Perkins, Maureen Narvo, Maurice Tobin, Tony O'Brien, Connie Jennings, Peter Cook

**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:** John Hayes, Gary Valaire, Jeremy Eden, Braxton Rayner, Patricia Gillett, Tui Innes, Raymond Morley, Louise Hall, Phil Riordan, Twon Nguyen, Eileen Jennings, Gwen Haggerty, Nick Fazzini, Rose Gathercole, Alexander Klein, Patty Keegan, Kathryn Kennedy, Leonetta Papichio, John Woods

*Please send prayer requests and items for the Bulletin to the Parish Office by 5pm on Wednesdays.*

## Parish Teams

**Bereavement Team:** Margaret Cox, Gail Lovell, Christopher Gregory, Margaret Beard, Margaret Newton, Anne Millard (02) 4979 1252.

**St Joseph's Pastoral Team:** Contact the Parish Office.

**Promoters of Safeguarding:** Louise Outram, Adele Rubino, Cynthia Tamonan, Sr Kath Williams rsm.

**RCIA:** Contact Mary-Anne at the parish office. Our website has a form which can be used to express interest in becoming a Catholic.

**Sacramental Program:** Contact Mary-Anne at the Parish Office.

**Baptism team:** Meets on the first Tuesday of the month, with parents who are preparing for their children's baptism.

## Bulletin Survey - and a possible reward!

We'd welcome your feedback about the parish bulletin - what you like, what could be done better, what new content could be included.

Submitting a response to the survey puts you into a draw to win a \$100 gift voucher.

Here is the link:

[https://tinyurl.com/  
Newcparishbulletinsurvey](https://tinyurl.com/Newcparishbulletinsurvey)

Or use the QR code:



## The Chuckle



The first computer can be dated back to Adam and Eve...

It was an Apple with limited memory; just one byte, then everything crashed...

## Participation - Every Voice Matters

Participation means that all the baptised share responsibility for the life of the Church.



Participation looks like:

- Speaking honestly at the Assembly
- Listening deeply to others
- Taking part in decisions that shape our region
- Offering leadership, talent, and time
- Encouraging those who are hesitant or unsure
- Welcoming new people into involvement
- Building teams and shared ministry

At Session 1, many people said:

- "How do we develop leaders?"
- "How do we involve more people?"
- "People need personal invitations."

Participation is not about doing more work.

It is about co-responsibility, working together for the mission God gives us.

As we approach Session 2 (discernment), your participation is essential.

The Holy Spirit speaks through the whole community, including you.

### Regional Parish Assembly-Session Two: Discerning what we Heard - Saturday 14 February

You are warmly invited to join us for a Regional Parish Assembly on Saturday 14 February at the Sacred Heart Cathedral precinct.

9.30am arrival, 10.00am commencement, 3.00pm finish. This gathering will be a time to discern and dream together. Your voice matters, and together we can help shape the future of our mission and ministry.

**RSVP: Please let us know by Monday 9 February** if you will be attending by completing this online form:

<https://tinyurl.com/ParishAssembly2>



OR contact the parish office:

⇒ on 4979 1101

⇒ or [newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au)



OR add your name to the sign up sheets that are available at all churches this weekend.

## Word of God Sunday

February 1, 2026

On September 30, 2019, on the liturgical memorial of St. Jerome, Pope Francis announced that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time would be celebrated as the Sunday of the Word of God.



The Australian bishops, in light of the regular coincidence of the Australia Day holiday weekend with the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, decided to choose another date - the first Sunday in February each year.

Pope Francis launched an appeal to all the faithful to keep the Sacred Scriptures close at all times and to read them frequently.

Let us pray so that more Catholics would get to read, know, listen, and live the Word of God, so indispensable in our relationship with our Lord.

## Opportunities for Parish Involvement

**Regional Finance Council and Regional Pastoral Council:** As we move to the second phase of our Regional Assembly (14 February) our Parish Priest is calling for Expressions of Interest or nominations for membership on the following Councils: **Regional Finance Council and Regional Pastoral Council**. Do you have a vision for the future of our parish and our church? Do you have an excitement for helping develop our strategic plans and ensuring our financial sustainability? This is an exciting opportunity to join those already working in this part of our vineyard and growing our parish into the future. Our councils care for the parishes of the inner City, Mayfield and Stockton.



Our Parish Priest is also looking for members of the parish who are interested in training as Sacristans, Junior and Senior Servers, Readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion (formally called Special Ministers), Funeral Ministry Team, membership on the parish carers team, leaders in Children's Liturgy, choir and musicians. These ministries are essential to the success of our parish and the development of our mission and outreach. Training is offered and ongoing support. **For more information contact the parish office, leaving your name, number and the ministry you are interested in, and a member of the relevant team, in consultation with the parish priest, will be in touch with you.** Some of our ministries require a National Criminal History Check or a Working with Children Check number: costs covered by the parish.

# Prayer/Meditation

## St Joseph's Prayer/Discussion Group

 We will commence our 2026 program with the Wollongong Lenten Program. We start Thursday 19 February at 9.30am in the meeting room at The Junction and will continue weekly until Easter. All welcome. Contact Janet Tully on 0435 518 671.

## Christian Meditation at Tighes Hill

This is non-denominational - everyone welcome.

WHEN: Monday afternoon 3.30 for 3.45 start.

WHERE: Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, 16 Tighes Tce, Tighes Hill.

The sessions include guided relaxation exercises, a reading from Fr John Main and 20 minutes of silent meditation.

## Living Waters Meditation

Join a Meditation Group – new people always welcome.



WHEN: Wednesdays at 7.30am; Fridays at 11.00am.

A Scripture Reflection follows meditation on Fridays.

WHERE: beside St Joseph's Church, Kenrick St, The Junction.

Contact: Christine O'Connor rsj 0412 044 785

## Wednesday Rosary



Pray the Rosary each Wednesday after 8:15am Mass in Sacred Heart Cathedral.

## Men's Rosary Group

The Men's Rosary is held the first Saturday of every month following Mass and Novena at Sacred Heart Cathedral. For more information contact Jason on 0499 854 928.

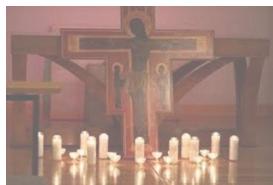


## Divine Mercy Devotion

First Sunday of the Month - 1 February @ 3:00pm: Chaplet of Divine Mercy at Christ the King, Mayfield West.

## Taize Service

Sunday, 1 February, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Tighes Hill 5pm – 6pm, followed by a shared supper. All welcome.



## Our Columbaria

Those in our Columbaria whose anniversaries occur in February.

### At Sacred Heart Cathedral:

Robert Charles	Xuyen An Le
Bartholomew	Patricia (Trish) Leishman
Jean Rosario Belcher	Alan James Long
Gwenneth Bennett	Fiore (Frank) Monaco
Anthony Bookallil	Stan O'Brien
Beryl Jean Clarke	Kathleen O'Neill
Marie Forrest	Roger Saunders
Joanne Franks	Robert Smith
Giuseppe Grach	Gregory Smith
Edna Jean Hancock	Toni Van Schyndel
Peter William Heggart	William (Bill) Warren
Michael Henessy	Clare Alice Withers
Ronald Joseph Jarrett	Joan Woodcock
Czeslaw (Cec) Kizeweter	

### At St Joseph's:

Nicholas Evans	Gerald Meighan
Robyn Field	Bob Smyth
Marie James	Kath Walsh
Marie Maddrell	Alan Watt
William McNeil	Johanna Schmuck
Margaret McVie	Rodney Wright

*Eternal rest grant unto them and may perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace, Amen.*

## Welcome to Our Newly Baptised!

We joyfully welcome those receiving the Sacrament of Baptism this weekend: At The Cathedral, Charlotte Hayward and Logan Wing.



## Lent 2026 with the Catholic Guy

Lent is a time when we can grow closer to God and prepare our hearts for the true meaning of Easter. For 40 days you will receive a short, practical and inspiring video in your inbox every morning to help you make this Lenten journey more powerful and prayerful. This program is FREE and you can sign up here: <https://tinyurl.com/LentCatholicGuy>. Go to BruceDownes.org for more information.

## Seeking Home to Rent

A couple, who are local active parishioners, are looking for a 3 Bedroom home to rent, hopefully with a shed. The areas preferred are Mayfield, Waratah, Georgetown, Lambton, Wallsend, anywhere where there is public transport. They have their own furniture. They would like to be long term tenants. They are seeking rental of \$600 - 700pw. Contact details: James 0425 358851, Aloha 0402 054635.

## Book Club

Book Club meets on Sunday, 1 February, to discuss *Scent of Oranges* by Kathy George.



Looking ahead, our book for March will be *Always Home, Always Homesick* by Hannah Kent, for April it will be *Legacy* by Chris Hammer.

If you would like to participate in book club meetings, please email:

[newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au)

## Adult Faith Development View, Chew, and Chat



View, Chew & Chat will begin a new series, *Parousia: The Bible and the Mass*, beginning Wednesday 11 February. Join us as we explore how Scripture comes alive in the Mass and deepens our understanding of what we celebrate each week.

Watch the first episode: [Parousia: The Bible and the Mass - St. Paul Center](#).

All welcome to join us then! To participate, please email the parish office.

[newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au)

## Donation Options

For anyone who wishes to make donations to the parish via direct deposit: Details are provided below for the individual parishes.

Account name: **CDF** BSB: **066739**

Account number: **see below\***

Reference: **Donation [Surname]**

### \*Account numbers:

Newcastle Parish – A/c no: **100008696**

Mayfield Parish – A/c no: **100007169**

Stockton Parish – A/c no: **100003308**

## Eftpos Tap & Go Donation Option

For some time now, EFTPOS devices have been used at the Cathedral and at Stockton and St Mary's churches as an option for 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> collection donations. We are now extending this option to other Mass centres. The collection plates remain available for cash offerings, but the EFTPOS option will also be available. Thank you for your generosity and support.

## Bequests

To help our Catholic Pastoral Region continue its mission of proclaiming the Good News, you might consider including us in your Will. You just need to specify which parish(es) you would like to help.

## Living the Gospel - Be-Attitudes

One way to read the Beatitudes is that Jesus was commanding and blessing the various people who found themselves in those sorts of conditions. Another, is as a list of qualities that all people should strive to exhibit. It's not just some people who happen to be economically poor who are blessed. Rather, we must all have a poverty of spirit – a humility about our need for God's merciful action in our lives. All are called to hunger and thirst for justice and all are called to be merciful. The Beatitudes are not a menu to select from, but rather an essential list of ingredients.

© Greg Sunter

**Greg Sunter** has worked in Catholic Education (Brisbane) for many years, most recently as a member of the Religious Education team and Mission and Formation team.

## Our Catholic Schools

**St Joseph's Primary School:** Karen McGinlay (*Principal*)

Union Street, The Junction NSW 2291

(02) 4961 2827

[www.merewether.catholic.edu.au](http://www.merewether.catholic.edu.au)

**Holy Family Primary School:** Shannon McGregor (*Principal*)

Pell Street, Merewether NSW 2291

(02) 4963 3009

[www.merewetherbeach.catholic.edu.au](http://www.merewetherbeach.catholic.edu.au)

**St Columban's Primary School:** Penny Banister (*Principal*)

Church Street, Mayfield NSW 2304

(02) 4968 3315

[www.mayfieldsc.catholic.edu.au](http://www.mayfieldsc.catholic.edu.au)

**St Peter's Primary School:** Dennis Nolan (*Principal*)

Dunbar St, Stockton NSW 2295

(02) 4928 1861

[www.stockton.catholic.edu.au](http://www.stockton.catholic.edu.au)

**St Francis Xavier's College:** Greg Ptolemy (*Principal*)

Parkway Avenue, Hamilton NSW 2303

(02) 4961 2863

[www.hamilton.catholic.edu.au](http://www.hamilton.catholic.edu.au)

**San Clemente High School:** Emma South (*Principal*)

78 Havelock St, Mayfield NSW 2304

(02) 4014 7300

[www.mayfieldsanc.catholic.edu.au](http://www.mayfieldsanc.catholic.edu.au)

**St Dominic's Catholic College:** Rachel Jones (*Principal*)

76 Havelock St, Mayfield NSW 2304

(02) 4968 1295

[www.mayfieldsd.catholic.edu.au](http://www.mayfieldsd.catholic.edu.au)

## Diocesan Events

<https://tinyurl.com/cdmnevents>

### Rite of Election 2026

The Rite of Election on Sunday 22 February 2026 is an opportunity to welcome all catechumens who will be baptised in their parishes at the Easter Vigil. A catechumen is an unbaptised person whose search for meaning has brought them to the Catholic Church. Please join in witness and prayerful support of those who choose to be Catholic. 1.30pm Sacred Heart Cathedral Newcastle West, followed by afternoon tea. RSVP for catering to [mission@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:mission@mn.catholic.org.au).



### Special Religious Education (SRE) EXPO

Free Expo for current and prospective SRE teachers and helpers.

Thanks to generous local donors, current and prospective Special Religious Education Teachers and helpers are invited to join us at this FREE Expo! There will be a keynote speaker from the ICCOREIS Team, plus lots of workshop options including classroom management, special needs and creative engagement (puppets, storytelling etc).

**Date:** Monday 2 February 2026

**Time:** 9:30am – 2:00pm

**Location:** Maryland, NSW

For enquiries, email [mission@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:mission@mn.catholic.org.au) or contact Nikki on 0417 773 444

### Diocesan Resource Centre

**Opening Hours:** Mondays and Fridays, 10am to 4pm. Open 1st & 3rd Saturday of each month, 10am to 2pm. cnr Tudor and Parry Sts, Newcastle West.

All resources are available to borrow; and are searchable on the library catalogue, which can be accessed through this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/DOMNLibrary>

OR use the QR code.



### Safeguarding

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has an abiding commitment to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult please contact the Office of Safeguarding: 02 4979 1390, or email [childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au) or visit [www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au](http://www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au)

## February Formation Film

**Saturday 7 February, 11:00am**

**Diocesan Resource Centre - Cnr Parry & Tudor Streets, Newcastle West**

Join us for viewing and discussion of the 2019 release film *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*. Lunch will be served after the screening. Reservations requested -

<https://tinyurl.com/CDMNfilm> or call

Mary on 02 4923 0682



### Praying Scripture Group

**Saturday 21 February, 2:30pm**

**Diocesan Resource Centre - Cnr Parry & Tudor Streets, Newcastle West**



The Praying Scripture group will start meeting at 2:30pm on Saturday 21 February at the Diocesan Resource Centre adjacent to Sacred Heart Cathedral Hamilton during Lent to pray and reflect on the Lenten Gospels. We will continue to meet after Easter with a particular focus on the Gospel of John this year. You can contact Wayne Caruana for more information on 0466 631394.

### Helping Others

#### Food Baskets for the Needy



Items of dry goods or tin food can be placed in the blue bins located at our churches. When donating please check expiry dates. We request that you do not donate peanut butter. Any of the following non-perishable items are welcome: UHT milk, cereal, spreads, tinned goods, pasta, rice, pasta sauces, tea, coffee, biscuits, custard, jelly, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant. Thank you.



#### Community Kitchens

The Community Kitchens run by CatholicCare can be accessed by anyone who needs a warm meal or support. Local locations are:

Adamstown: Every Wednesday, 11am to 1pm at 486 Glebe Road, Adamstown

Newcastle: Every Saturday, 5.30pm to 6.30pm (6.30pm to 7.30pm during Daylight Savings) at Civic Park, King Street, Newcastle.

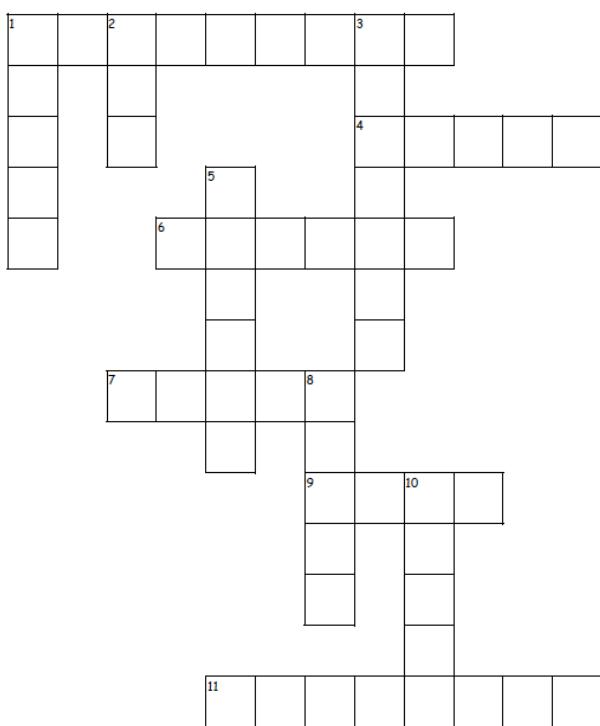
Phone: 4979 1120

Email: [foodprograms@catholiccare.org.au](mailto:foodprograms@catholiccare.org.au)

## CROSSWORD

### Blessed are the poor in spirit

Mt 5:1-12ab



#### Across

- 1: Jesus' followers
- 4: a large group of people
- 6: God blesses people with pure \_\_\_\_\_
- 7: our planet
- 9: unblemished
- 11: a very tall, large land mass

#### Down

- 1: you do this when you are thirsty
- 2: Jesus \_\_\_ down on the side of the mountain
- 3: extremely happy
- 5: a gift for good deeds
- 8: glad
- 10: correct

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A [N04ORSUA\_2005\_CWG.rtf]

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## JUNIOR WORDSEARCH

### Blessed are the poor in spirit

Mt 5:1-12ab

Q H P C P P V Z A C R O W D  
 K O U E L D M X X B N J F K  
 A I R D I S C I P L E S E C  
 A T E D O T H X G Z Q R J E  
 D R I N K G Q O B O Y I G P  
 G D W L N H E A R T S G P E  
 M O U N T A I N T R H H J D  
 E P D H B Z I S X Z A T U T  
 R M K P V L A Y N E A N I L  
 E X C I T E D U K X U S L T  
 R E W A R D Z A E A R T H Z  
 Y C N U P H A P P Y K A L Q  
 N N G U D U E H F Z U B Z M  
 F L P V S A T J X R J V U W

Try to find these words:

crowd  
 disciples  
 drink  
 earth  
 excited  
 happy  
 hearts  
 mountain  
 pure  
 reward  
 right  
 sat

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A [N04ORSUA\_2005\_WSG.rtf]

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# Today's Liturgy

## Entrance Antiphon: Ps 105:47

Save us, O Lord our God!  
And gather us from the nations,  
to give thanks to your holy name,  
and make it our glory to praise you.

## First Reading: Zeph 2:3; 3:12-13

*In your midst I will leave a humble and a lowly people.*



## Responsorial Psalm: Ps 145:7-10. R. Mt 5:3

**(R.) Happy the poor in spirit;  
the kingdom of heaven is theirs!**

1. It is the Lord who keeps faith forever, who is just to those who are oppressed. It is he who gives bread to the hungry, the Lord, who sets prisoners free. (R.)
2. It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, who raises up those who are bowed down, the Lord, who protects the stranger and upholds the widow and orphan. (R.)
3. It is the Lord who loves the just but thwarts the path of the wicked. The Lord will reign for ever, Zion's God, from age to age. (R.)

## Second Reading: 1 Cor 1:26-31

*God has chosen what is weak by human reckoning.*

## Gospel Acclamation: Mt 5:12

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Rejoice and be glad;  
Your reward will be great in heaven.  
Alleluia!

## Gospel: Mt 5:1-12

*Happy are the poor in spirit.*

## Communion Antiphon: Mt 5:3-4

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.  
Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.



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The English translation of the Psalm Responses, the Alleluia and Gospel Verses, and the Lenten Gospel Acclamations, and the Titles, Summaries, and Conclusion of the Readings, from the Lectionary for Mass © 1997, 1981, 1968, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved.

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# Scripture Commentary

The prophet addresses the people with a threefold exhortation: Seek the Lord! Seek righteousness! Seek humility! The second part of the reading is an oracle of salvation in which God's loving words offer assurance and hope. A portion of the people will not only survive, they will faithfully conform to the dictates of the covenant. This remnant will be humbled, perhaps sobered by the suffering that it will have to undergo. Aware of their own dismal situation, these people have taken refuge in God. The path of righteousness that the remnant will follow will be the consequence of their deliverance, not the cause of it. Salvation and prosperity all come from the hand of God.

Although covenant is never explicitly mentioned in the **psalm** response, various themes seem to point to it. There is mention of God's faithfulness and an allusion to God's deliverance of the people from the bondage of Egypt and God's providential care of them during their sojourn in the wilderness. In strict patriarchal societies, women and children are often the most vulnerable. These are the ones for whom God cares.

The final verse praises God as sovereign and eternal ruler in Jerusalem, the very hill that is at the centre of the lives of the people. This is a God who has entered into their history and into the very social fabric of their existence. Such a God deserves praise.

**Paul** speaks about honour-and-shame. Judged by the standards of society at the time, the Christians are unimportant; they are really nobodies. God chooses the nobodies of the world in order to shame those who think that they are somebodies. At the heart of Jesus' teaching was the promise of a new age when society would be reshaped so that all would gain access to the blessings that life has to offer. Promises such as these would attract people who were oppressed or who felt themselves dispossessed of the things of the world. Paul next turns from ecclesiology to Christology, insisting that every good thing that we have we have received because of Christ.

The **sermon of the mount** was directed to Jesus' close followers, not to the broader crowds. While the teachings are all in some way directed toward the establishment of the reign of God, the type of behaviour or values that Jesus advocates is frequently the opposite of that espoused by society at large. This fact offers us a way to understand the challenges set before us in the beatitudes. Perhaps the way to interpret them is to look first at the blessings promised. We may see that the behaviour that Jesus is advocating is at odds with what society would say will guarantee the blessing that we seek. It is clear that each and every beatitude invites us to turn our standards and our way of life upside down and inside out.

© Dianne Bergant CSA

**Dianne Bergant CSA** was a Professor of Biblical Studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where she taught from 1978 to 2014. She has taught and lectured in many places in the United States and abroad.