



Bringing Home the Word

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 17, 2019

God's Nurturing Messengers

By Dan Finucane

Flower bulbs have an “up” end and a “down” end. It matters how you plant them. I didn't know that when I was a teenager. If you plant bulbs pointing up, they grow and blossom. If you plant them pointing down, they're in trouble. If you plant them more or less at random, there could be gaps in the flower bed.

I learned this one spring when our parish got a new pastor. He hired a few of us from the parish. I was the flower planter. He didn't select me for this job because of my knowledge of flowers. He picked me because he wanted to hire young parishioners to give us a little

spending money.

Later that spring, when the flowers starting blooming, some of mine didn't. Our new pastor wasn't upset. He thought it was funny. He thought I could learn a little about planting bulbs...but I learned a whole lot more from this man who knew people have to grow into the job of being human. People might start going in the wrong direction, but they can be turned around with gentleness. They might even blossom.

The Bible is full of plant images. Today Jeremiah describes how a shrub in the desert doesn't know when its next drink will come. He describes those who are really blessed—the ones who are planted by a stream.

The Scriptures aren't really trying to give us information about plants. (I haven't found anything helpful there about bulbs.) But some basic growing points are clear. God isn't too keen on tearing up the garden. God plants near living streams. God teaches us to *trust* by an amazing, surprising strategy. God gives us messengers who *trust us*, guide us, nurture us—give us room to grow. +

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Sunday Readings

Jeremiah 17:5–8

Blessed are those who trust in the LORD...They are like a tree planted beside the waters.

1 Corinthians 15:12, 16–20

Now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Luke 6:17, 20–26

And raising his eyes toward his disciples [Jesus] said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.”

A Word from Pope Francis

No vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people, in the experience of fraternal love. Did not Jesus say: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”?

—Day of prayer for vocations, May 11, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I available to mentor others, especially a young person who is heading in the wrong direction?
- Am I grateful towards those who mentor or nurture me?

The Beatitudes' Promises



Who are the happy, fortunate, blessed people? What is the source of happiness?

One of the most important, paradoxical sections in Scripture is the vision of happiness Jesus gives in his Sermon on the Mount. In the Gospels of Matthew (5:3–10) and Luke (6:20–26), Jesus proclaims what blessedness is and makes promises to those who follow his proclamation. The blessed, happy, and fortunate, he tells us, are the poor in spirit, those who mourn and are merciful, those who seek righteousness and peace, the pure in heart, and the persecuted. The promise awaiting them is God's kingdom!

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. In our more honest moments, we recognize our neediness, intellectual limitations, spiritual inadequacies, and moral failures.

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

In our helplessness, we turn to God. Our response of gratitude, itself a grace, means the kingdom of heaven is ours.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Life's journey involves having our hearts broken repeatedly. Sometimes this is due to our own sin, sometimes because of the cruelty of others. Jesus reminds us that the truth sets us free. Those who are honest about their sorrows and sins will gain his consolation.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. These meek individuals strive to emulate Jesus in obedience, and submit to whatever is sent their way. The meek know that God is ultimately in control, and they are about doing his divine will. Peace will be their everlasting inheritance.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. We all have longings: for meaning, intimacy, and depth. But one of the deepest longings is for justice. Only when rights are protected and promoted, when we fulfill our obligations to God and to others, will this hunger and thirst be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. If we give mercy, we shall get mercy. God has been merciful to us, and we should pass this gift to others. A merciless Christian is a contradiction in terms. Mercy is love in the face of sin and injury. Mercy is the presence of Jesus in a wounded, fractured world.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for

they will see God. The pure of heart are those who are undefiled by attitudes that distance us from God. We know our seeing is dependent upon the condition of our hearts. If pure, we shall see the glory of God and our own as well as others' dignity.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. God's peace is the rightness of relationships. Peace embraces four satellites: truth, charity, freedom, and justice. Peacemakers are instruments of all four of these graces. When that work is done well, they know themselves to be blessed because they are truly children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This beatitude exemplifies Jesus' radical message: that persecution and happiness go together. The true Christian longs to share fully in the life of Jesus: his life, suffering, death, and resurrection. This is the gateway into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus' mission was to take people from sin and death into the happiness of heaven. The beatitudes describe his vision, charting the path to make that journey. In the end, it is all the work of the Holy Spirit. +

PRAYER

*Lord, you never forget us;
you answer all our needs.
Keep me from being anxious
about many things.*

—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 18–23

Monday, Weekday:

Gn 4:1–15, 25 / Mk 8:11–13

Tuesday, Weekday:

Gn 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 10 / Mk 8:14–21

Wednesday, Weekday:

Gn 8:6–13, 20–22 / Mk 8:22–26

Thursday, Weekday:

Gn 9:1–13 / Mk 8:27–33

Friday, Chair of St. Peter:

1 Pt 5:1–4 / Mt 16:13–19

Saturday, St. Polycarp:

Heb 11:1–7 / Mk 9:2–13