

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A 2026

Blessed those who mourn

In today's Gospel we begin to listen to the most famous sermon Jesus preached – the Sermon on the Mount – that we find in the Gospel of Matthew. We will continue to listen to this sermon over the next two Sundays until we begin the season of Lent.

In a sense it is a little strange for me to preach a sermon on a sermon! The best advice I can give is just to encourage you to read and reflect on the whole of the Sermon on the Mount in Chapters 5 to 7 of Matthew's Gospel.

But I will mention just a few things. The first thing to note are the opening words of today's Gospel: "Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. ... Then he began to speak." We know from the previous chapter in Matthew's Gospel that the crowds he is speaking to are made up of people from Galilee, Jerusalem, and Judea (that is, Jewish people) but also people from Syria and from the ten cities on the other side of the Jordan (who are Gentiles, not Jews).

And that is very important. Jesus' sermon on the Mount is not just a sermon intended for Jews (or Christians) but for all humankind. There is nothing in it that is exclusively Jewish or Christian. Mahatma Ghandi, the great Hindu leader of India, for instance, wrote that he gained great inspiration from the Sermon on the Mount as he sought, through peaceful, non-violent resistance, to achieve statehood for his nation.

It is also important to note that Jesus went up a hill or a mountain to give the sermon. This is an allusion to the time when Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the Law (the 10 Commandments) from God. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is presenting the New Law of God, including the Beatitudes. This New Law does not contradict the Law God gave to Moses but has a different emphasis. While the 10 Commandments focused on actions, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus focuses on attitudes. He knows that evil actions flow from inner attitudes that are evil.

In the first part of the sermon, which we heard today, Jesus presents to us the Beatitudes. As we listen to them, we note how deeply connected they are. You cannot live some of the Beatitudes but not others. You cannot be a peacemaker but not merciful. You cannot hunger and thirst for what is right and not be pure of heart, and so on.

And as I mentioned, the Beatitudes are words of wisdom for all humankind, not just for Christians or Jews. A very good example is the beatitude, 'Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted.' When tragic events happen, we can react with violence or with anger, or perhaps we can shut down emotionally, acting like the event didn't happen. None of the responses are helpful or healthy. When great tragedies happen to us as individuals or families, or as communities or a nation, we need to mourn together. We need to find ways to grieve what we have lost. We need to be able to express our sorrow and to comfort one another.

A very good example of this was in the aftermath of the tragic shooting at Bondi Beach last month when peoples of all faiths came together in different rituals to mourn the tragedy and offer comfort and solidarity with the families of the victims.

We are truly blessed when we are able to mourn in healthy ways the losses we experience in our lives. Let us pray in a special way in this Mass for all who have experienced tragedy in their lives in recent times that, with support from others, they may be able to mourn their loss in healthy ways and find comfort

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