

## Cycle A – Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Jan. 29, 2023

“Blessed are the peacemakers ...”

### OPENING PRAYER (Psalm 146)

*Leader: The Lord who keeps faith forever,  
God gives justice for the oppressed.*

**All: God gives food to the hungry.  
The Lord sets the prisoners free.**

*Leader: The Lord opens the eyes of the blind  
and lifts up those who are bowed down;*

**All: the Lord loves the righteous  
and watches over the stranger.  
Amen**



### First Reading – Zephaniah 2:3, 3:12-13

We only hear the words of this minor prophet twice in a Sunday Mass. Much of his text paints the doom and gloom of the “Day of the Lord.” Yet Zephaniah’s threatening oracles has the surprise of God’s mercy nestled in its folds and today we hear it: “Perhaps you may be sheltered on the day of the Lord’s anger.” God is flexible, God’s mercy is simply always waiting around the corner. To seek this mercy we only have to conform our behavior to the demands of the covenant.

1. Take a Bible and read today’s segment in the entire context of Chapter 2 and 3 – does this help your understanding of today’s passage?
2. What does the word “remnant” represent for you? Why do you think the prophet uses this word?

### Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Again we hear Paul’s indignation as he continues to chide the Corinthians for their factions and conflicts. He reminds them of God’s upside-down approach to holiness: God chooses what is foolish, weak and lowly. So, says Paul, what are you doing focusing on human categories of power and status? God knows we idolize the things we can see and touch. Paul stresses that the reason for God to act contrary to human ways is to help us stay out of the trap of relying on human/finite power and wisdom.

1. Paul’s words are addressed to us as well – what would you like to respond to Paul?
2. How has God used your weakness to serve His purposes?

## **Gospel – Matthew 5:1-12**

The Beatitudes are well-known among both Christians and non-Christians. They have become the signature of the Christian message, forming the substance of Jesus' teaching. To call the poor, the mourning, the hungry, the persecuted "blessed" seems at first reading ludicrous – another upside-down move on God's part. When we realize that Jesus makes these pronouncements from the perspective of God's glory in which he himself shares, we realize that the poor, the mourning, the hungry, the persecuted are all identified with the Son of God who died on the cross: poor, despised and falsely condemned. It is Jesus' capacity to hold divinity and humanity in loving tension in his moment of death, which makes us truly blessed in all our afflictions.

1. Which Beatitude connects to a real experience for you?
2. How do you see blessedness operate in the experiences of life mentioned in the Beatitudes?
3. Read Luke's version of the same event – Luke 6: 20-26 – what are some similarities and differences, compared to Matthew's version?

### **LIVING THE WORD**

What is God's challenge for me/us this coming week?

### **PRAYING THE WORD**

**Intercession:** For those who mourn, who suffer poverty and injustice, who ache to bring peace in the world, and for all those who are persecuted for their faith in Jesus. We pray to the Lord.

*Invite other intentions, and end with "Our Father ..."*

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Leader: God of the poor and the meek,  
you took on our human poverty in your Son Jesus,  
look upon us in our times of need.*

*All: Raise us to the dignity of your love  
especially in times of sorrow and affliction.*

*Leader: May we bless one another's grief and pain  
with the gift of your love and mercy.*

**All: May we thus share in the peace of Christ  
who suffered in order that we may be blessed.  
Amen.**

*Leader: Let us share with one another the sign of Christ's Peace.*