

Homily  
Wednesday of the 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in OT  
*St. Ann Novena – “Blessed are those who mourn” Matthew 5:4a*  
July 19, 2023

The Third Luminous Mystery; the Proclamation of the Kingdom of God; the Sermon on the Mount; the Beatitudes. These nine blessings establish the message of God’s love and encapsulate our mission in this life. They express God’s desire for us to follow Him. They lay out how we are to live in this world and reach eternal life. And as we heard last night from Deacon Steve, we nine deacons have been tasked with unfolding the meaning and impact of these words of Jesus.

My name is Scott. I was ordained in 2016 and am assigned to St. Paul in Florence. And this is, if my math is right, the eighth time I’ve had the honor and privilege to preach here during the St. Ann Novena. Tonight, I’ve been specifically tasked with sharing my thoughts on, “Blessed are those who mourn.” Please pray for me; I’ll do my best.

The word beatitude refers to a state of deep happiness or joy. These nine Beatitudes are blessings that God has intended to bless all of us with if we are only open to His blessings, open to the joy He wants to lavish upon us.

To mourn is to feel deep sorrow or regret. We mourn a loved one’s death. We mourn the loss of a job or wealth or status in the community. We mourn the suffering of those close to us or for ourselves when we suffer pain due to an injury or illness. We mourn as a mechanism to grieve. And God hears our mourning.

As Wesley, or the Man in the Black Mask, said in the movie, The Princess Bride, “Life is pain, Highness. Anyone who says differently is selling something.”

We suffer in life. This is a reality we all know too well. So how do we cope? How do we deal with this pain and suffering when God offers joy and happiness? We embrace our mourning. It’s okay to be sad when bad things happen. It’s perfectly understandable to cry or even wail when we experience a great loss. God understands.

What do we call a person who has experienced an event that would crush you or me, but doesn’t let his emotions show, remains solid, unaffected, impenetrable? We call this person apathetic. We consider a person who doesn’t embrace his or her emotions troubled. We know that the pain we suffer must be experienced, endured, even embraced to be overcome. And by doing this, with God’s help, with God’s blessing, we are comforted in our mourning.

But do we really feel comforted? Do we really accept God’s blessing in light of a tragedy? Sometimes it seems too much to bear. What can we do?

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” – John 3:16

God didn't give us the promise of an easy life. He didn't give us a guarantee that everything would go our way. Life is hard. Life is sometimes uncaring. Life can often send tragedy our way. And, as our bishop's pontifical motto says, "In all things give thanks." Yes, even the bad things; not just the good things.

First Thessalonians says, "In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:18

God doesn't say, "Don't worry, I'll give you everything you need to be happy, safe and secure in this world." Rather, He tells us to be prepared for the wolf in sheep's clothing. And He gives us the tools to be strong and remain faithful, if we will only listen and take action. He gives us the Sacraments to bring us together as the Family of God. He gives us His Word proclaimed for instruction and wisdom. And He let's us know that, when things of this world hurt us or when we hurt others, we can come to Him in our sorrow and regret and be comforted.

Knowing that the God of the Universe is there to comfort me with His infinitely large arms, His all-powerful hug and His immeasurable love, brings great comfort to me. I just need to trust in Him.

In tonight's Gospel, Jesus tells us, "...although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike." And, "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."

I see a correlation here between receiving the blessings promised in these Beatitudes and remaining childlike so as to know God through the Son. Jesus wants us to know the Father, but it is only through knowing Jesus that we can know the Father. What a travesty for us to not know the Father. It is in our sinfulness that we willingly turn away from God. How much more could we mourn than with the loss of God in our lives.

In a few moments, by the Words of Consecration, Jesus will become present to us on this altar and we will come forward to receive Jesus in this most Blessed Sacrament. Jesus wants to be one with us. In joining with Jesus in the Eucharist, we all become one with Him, one with each other, and one with His Father. How much more comforting can that be?