

# **CELEBRATE SABBATH**

## **Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**God is steadfast love.**

**“You created my inmost being and knit me together in my mother's womb.”**

**(Psalm 139)**

### **Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13**

King Josiah (640 B.C.E) attempted a much-needed religious reform after the disreputable reigns of several of Judah's kings who were faithless and immoral. Zephaniah mourned the depravity of his people. He condemned their pride, their rebelliousness and their lack of trust in God. True piety consisted in hearing the Lord and trusting in him...the kings and the people of Judah had done neither. Zephaniah warned that the Day of the Lord was coming, a day when all nations, including Judah, would receive just retribution for all their sins (1:7-18). When that day dawned, the prophet warned, God would "remove the proud boasters from your midst .....I will leave a humble and lowly people...they will do no wrong and tell no lies.....they will rest with no one to disturb them" (3:11-13). The virtuous, truthful, faithful, humble remnant will know peace and prosperity.

**Be virtuous, truthful and faithful and find peace in the presence of God in your life.**

### **Psalm 146**

**The Lord keeps faith forever,  
secures justice for the oppressed,  
gives food to the hungry.  
The Lord sets the captives free.**

### **I Corinthians 1:26-31**

For the most part, the early Church was composed of simple and humble folks, although many from the highest ranks of society also became Christians. Paul found that this was the glory of Christianity. In the eyes of the law at the time, a slave was a “tool” in the hands of his master. The master could do anything he wanted with his slaves, amuse himself in torturing them or even kill them. Christianity made people who were things into real persons, men and women, sons and daughters of God. Those who were worthless in the eyes of the law at the time heard good news of their dignity and worth, that they were precious in the eyes of God.

**In this excerpt, Paul speaks of four things that Christ is for us. Christ is God’s wisdom for us – in him we discover who we are and what we are called to be. Christ is Righteousness and for Paul it meant right relationship with God. Christ is consecration - it is in walking with him**

**that we keep our baptismal garments clean and pure, that we live out our baptismal commitments. Christ is deliverance – in him, we find deliverance for our sins, that we find our true freedom.**

## **Mathew 5:1-12**

In the Beatitudes, we have the essence of Christ's message. Mathew says, Jesus "opened his mouth" and began to teach. This simply means that he opened his heart and poured out his spirit. This means that it is intimate, personal teaching without barriers.

"Blessed" is a special word in Greek. It describes the joy that has its secret within itself, the joy/bliss which is serene, self-contained - the joy which shines through pain, sorrow, disappointment, loss, etc. This is inherent, pure joy.

Jesus articulated for his followers certain attitudes they must cultivate if they are to live as a kingdom people...certain disposition toward themselves and the world around them. We have come to know them and love them as the "Beatitudes". We are called to cultivate these attitudes...they are to shape our character...the quality of our presence must become "Be-Attitudes."

Noble people must have noble attitudes... God's people must have godly attitudes...The Beatitudes are for people who have their hearts set on the reign of God, the kingdom of God...They are not doctrines...not policies of a Church...not rules legislated by an authority...they are for those who want to live nobles lives, for those who want their lives to be a blessing for themselves and for the world around them...they are for kingdom people and we are a kingdom people...

**The Beatitudes tells us that the Reign of God is already in our midst if and when we bless the world with living lives transformed with the beatitudes...People of the kingdom, noble people, virtuous people, kingdom people have "God's Reign" in their hearts and their hearts can not rest until the whole world is striving to be just, compassionate, single-hearted, peace-filled, harmonious...**

**They call us to live transformed lives...they urge us to be Christ in the world!**

Remember, they came straight from the heart of Christ...Jesus sat down, opened his mouth and spoke: Blessed are you when poor, merciful, gentle, thirsting for justice, single-hearted, peacemaking, blessing the enemies...they reflect the quality of the heart of the Christ...

**Take a moment...prayerfully reflect on which of the beatitudes you can identify with and what they mean to you personally. Which of them is most inspiring, challenging and calling forth response from you? And how do you respond?**

**Saint of the day, January 29 - Servant of God Brother Juniper and 12 other saints are remembered this day.**

Servant of God Brother Juniper was a simple man who joined Saint Francis in the earliest days of the Order. Saint Francis praised him and wished he had a “whole forest of such Junipers.” We don’t know much about Juniper before he joined the friars in 1210. Francis sent him to establish “places” for the friars in Gualdo Tadino and Viterbo. When Saint Clare was dying, Juniper consoled her. He was devoted to the passion of Jesus and was known for his simplicity.

Several stories about Juniper in the Little Flowers of St. Francis illustrate his exasperating generosity. Once Juniper was taking care of a sick man who had a craving to eat pig’s feet. This helpful friar went to a nearby field, captured a pig and cut off one foot, and then served this meal to the sick man. The owner of the pig was furious and immediately went to Juniper’s superior. When Juniper saw his mistake, he apologized profusely. He also ended up talking this angry man into donating the rest of the pig to the friars!

Another time Juniper had been commanded to quit giving part of his clothing to the half-naked people he met on the road. Desiring to obey his superior, Juniper once told a man in need that he couldn’t give the man his tunic, but he wouldn’t prevent the man from taking it either. In time, the friars learned not to leave anything lying around, for Juniper would probably give it away. He died in 1258 and is buried at Ara Coeli Church in Rome.

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