

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 2, 2020

“In nihil ab nihilo quam cito recedimus.” (How quickly we fall back from nothing to nothing.)

In his Encyclical Letter, *Spe Salvi* (Saved in Hope), Pope Benedict XVI remarked that *“We who have always lived with the Christian concept of God, and have grown accustomed to it, have almost ceased to notice that we possess the hope that ensues from a real encounter with this God.”* We listened today as the Gospel of Saint Matthew (Matthew 5:1-12) was read. This passage is often referred to simply as The Beatitudes (Blessings). We have heard them so often we may have them memorized. Yet, have we become so accustomed to the sense of Hope that Jesus is offering His listeners, we are no longer moved by the depth and riches they present? I wonder, if we were still being moved to tears by the words and actions of Jesus, would our churches be empty of thankful Christians? Nevertheless, let us take just one of these hope-filled blessings to reflect upon it.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Meekness can be defined using different words. A person who is meek is seen as one who is submissive, docile, or accepting of the suffering they must endure in the situation they find themselves. It has been described in sayings similar to this: *“That person is like a doormat, people walk all over them.”* It would seem that this version of meekness would not be a virtue Jesus would want to elevate. This would be true, because it is very far from the Biblical understanding of meekness. To understand the virtue of meekness, one only needs to look at Jesus. Meekness is strength. It is the strength to accept whatever situations life or God places us in. It is not some pitiful form of endurance. It is a willingness to accept, and an acceptance based in faith, hope, and love. Meekness is not, therefore, a quality of the weak, but a virtue of the strong who are placed in vulnerable situations, yet refuse to compromise themselves to appease the situation.

I stated earlier that to understand the life of Jesus is to understand meekness. Jesus, who has the power to change any and all situations chooses not to act. He freely chooses to endure all the while knowing that this choice will lead to His suffering and death. This is not the path of a weak compromising person.

Some have questioned: *“Why, with all of His power, did He not choose another way?”* To answer this question, we must understand the second part of the Beatitude; particularly the word inherit. To inherit something is to gain something. We say that Jesus inherited/gained victory over death and the Devil. Others would add that He inherited/gained us also. These two answers may be good, but I find they discount meekness. A meek person endures because they see the big picture. Jesus, necessarily, would have also seen and clearly understood the bigger picture. May I propose that Jesus, due to His meekness, freely chose not to inherit/gain anything, but would rather give that inheritance to you and I. We are the ones who gained something. Our gain is not just victory over death, sin, Satan, but our victory is Jesus. A Jesus who is relatable. A Jesus who endures the bad situations of life as we must endure them also. A God who knows what hunger is, what pain feels like, what loneliness is, what it means to be afraid. A God who suffers with me. Therefore, I can speak to Him in all of these situations knowing He KNOWS what I am going through. This is a very good reason why our Christian faith is hope-filled. We are now able to see, like He did, the bigger picture. It is one of Jesus standing at the right hand of His Father, my Father, with the same scars of life I possess, and beckoning me to join Him and so many others in His Father’s Kingdom of Love.