

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) – Valley of Our Lady – February 8, 2026

Readings: Isaiah 58:7-10; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Matthew 5:13-16

The passage from the Gospel according to Matthew that we have just heard follows immediately after the Beatitudes:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are they who mourn... Blessed are the meek... Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness... Blessed are the merciful... Blessed are the clean of heart... Blessed are the peacemakers... Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness... Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute...” (Mt 5:3-10).

I think it is important to note this proximity, because it helps us to better understand what Jesus meant when he said to his disciples: “You are the salt of the earth! (...) You are the light of the world!”

Human beings, by their very nature, seek happiness, because happiness is the flavor and beauty of life, the salt and light of life. Christ came to satisfy this thirst for happiness that the Father has placed in the human heart since creation. Christ came and remains in the world to offer every human being his answer to the thirst for happiness, and this answer is expressed in the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are the salt and light, the flavor and beauty that Christ offers and gives to our lives. We need the Beatitudes because we need to be happy, truly happy: we live for this, we are created for this.

If we think about the story of creation in the first chapters of Genesis, we see that this whole dynamic begins with the creation of human beings in the image and likeness of God. Man and woman are created in the image of a God of communion who finds joy in others. After the creation of man, God “found it very good” (Genesis 1:31). God is very pleased, very happy with his creature, and he shares his joy within the heart of man.

Original sin disrupted this destiny of human beings to find happiness in God. After sin, human beings must find the path to happiness, to true happiness. They need someone to redeem their happiness, to save their lost joy.

Every spiritual guide offers a path to happiness, but I believe that no spiritual guide offers one that is as realistic as the one Christ offers us. For Christ alone goes before us and leads us on a path where joy is sought and experienced without censoring suffering. What is original in the search for happiness through and in Christ is the Cross and the Resurrection: the Paschal Mystery. Easter joy in the presence of the Lord is not only a joy *beyond* suffering, *beyond* the drama of life, but a joy *through* suffering, at the very heart of the drama of life: “Blessed are the poor... Blessed are they who mourn... Blessed are they who are persecuted...”

Joy in Christ is proof in itself, for in Jesus joy can be experienced as peace and confidence even in the midst of suffering. It is this joy that is the salt of the earth and the light of the world; it is this joy that constitutes the specific radiance of Christians in the midst of the world; it is this joy that the world does not have.

The world cannot bring joy into the drama of life. It seeks joy beyond suffering and the drama of life. But we see that this only produces dreams, an escape from reality, and cowardly violence that goes so far as to eliminate the weakest so that they do not disturb the selfish dream of a happy life.

The announcement that joy is possible even in the midst of suffering does not mean taking pleasure in suffering, but affirming that the ideal of life is love, and that true joy is not in well-being, but in the gift of oneself. It is not in order to suffer that we need to find joy in suffering, but in order to be able to love.

It is this mystery of Easter joy that, through love, emerges from the darkness of our suffering and evil that Isaiah prophesied: "If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday."

And Isaiah had already understood that such a light shining in the darkness could not be lit by us. We are sinners and we do not know how to love. But from our darkness can arise the cry, the thirst, and the demand for light. God, who alone is light, who alone is love, must respond to our call, to our cry, and manifest himself in our darkness. Isaiah then announces the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ: "Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!"

To be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, we must not light ourselves and season ourselves, but be men and women who, from the depths of their awareness of being without light and flavor, beg for themselves and for the world the light and wisdom of Christ, who beg for his redemptive presence that enlightens and gives meaning to the world.

So, our first Beatitude could be that of Saint Paul, which consists in not being afraid of our weakness, our lack of brilliance and wisdom, and even not being afraid of our fear: "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of Spirit and power."

All our strength, all our light, our taste for life, all our happiness and love are all in God who, through his Spirit, always comes again to respond "Here I am!" to the cry of our misery.

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