

## **Friday (Mary Ward)**

Whoever would work much good must have an entire mistrust of themselves and great confidence in God. We ought to work and suffer for God, and for the rest let him make use of us according to his good pleasure, for the fulfilment of his holy will should be our sole wish and only desire. Whoever will serve God must of necessity love the cross, and be ready to suffer much for Christ's sake. We must never speak of the defects of other people. Do not easily be offended at the doings of others, since you cannot know their intentions. Do good and do it well.

### **Scripture (Matthew 5:10-12)**

***Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of righteousness: the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven: this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.***

**Please note:** the readings on Sunday are for the Presentation of the Lord, rather than the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the year. This would mean the Beatitudes are skipped. As they are of such fundamental importance to how we fulfil our vocation to share Christ's work, I have gone with the readings for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the year.

May I recommend you visit the website [www.fr-tom-cullinan.co.uk/teaching-preaching-writing](http://www.fr-tom-cullinan.co.uk/teaching-preaching-writing) There are a number of his talks in written and audio form, with new material added each month.

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4th Week of Ordinary Time

### **Blessed are those who don't fit in.**

*The Prophet Zephaniah spoke at a time when the powerful rulers of the Chosen people were feeling secure and pleased with themselves, but whose wealth had changed them. Although they were still 'religious' in that they performed all the ceremonies, they had forgotten their need of God, and of their responsibility to the poor and needy who they exploited rather than looked after. The Book of Zephaniah is clear that God isn't going to stand by. He will bring down those who treat him with contempt. This is not, as many of us think of God in the Old Testament, him having a fit of temper; he is acting to preserve the Covenant, (in much the same way a surgeon may have to amputate what is diseased to preserve the body). In 3:12-13 God promises that after the 'clear out', there will be a new beginning, with the 'anawim', the 'little ones', who had lived lives of humility and integrity (and who were also the poor, the ones without power in society). The Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12) are the foundations for the new beginning that is the Kingdom of God established in Jesus. He delivers them to people who will build the Kingdom of God (the new Covenant), but unlike in the Old Testament, this group will not be 'starting again' after the old guard has been removed; they have to go back down the mountain to live the new way in the midst of people (religious, military and civil) who will reject the message – so the Beatitudes can't be side-lined as 'ivory tower' thinking. I can't say 'I'd love to live by them, but it isn't possible in today's world.'*

*To outsiders, key words such as 'meek', 'merciful' and 'persecuted' might suggest that Jesus is encouraging people to be insipid, mouse-like creatures who allow others to walk over them whilst they dream impractical dreams of a better world. How many times do we people (including those in the pew!) say, 'All very well, but you have to live in the real world', a world whose ways include relying on your resources, the competitive 'look after number one' rule, and any charity or altruism is fine but optional.*

*The Beatitudes call disciples out of this world, demanding they be poor in spirit, i.e. know their dependence on God; share God's love of, and concern for, others; not to impose their will on others but be gentle and allow others to flourish; to mourn, i.e. be deeply affected by the suffering of those affected by the evil in the world; not to shrug their shoulders and accept 'that's the way the world is', but have a deep longing (hunger and thirst) for a world which is just for all; to neither demand revenge nor say 'forgive and forget' - not sweep hurt under the carpet but show mercy.*

*In short, Beatitudes people are completely committed to building God's (they are pure in heart), so they don't remain apart from the world, nor do they simply take what they need from it, but actively try to build peace when there is injustice or suffering because, as children of God, all are brothers and sisters.*

*To be 'blessed' means, in this case, to be 'fortunate'. This means that when Jesus' disciples go back to their lives, they will consider the successful, the powerful, the ones who get their own way as 'unfortunate'! No wonder they will be ridiculed and persecuted. This new way of living disrupts and challenges the assumptions and ways of the world. But to live as beatitude people is to be blessed and to begin to receive the rewards now: being given the strength and love to care (comforted); finding God is present when we search, (satisfied), being freed from our limitations (have mercy shown) and living freely as members and builders of God's Kingdom, now.. Martin Bennett*

### **Monday (John V. Taylor.)**

The Holy Spirit is that power which opens the eyes that are closed, hearts that are unaware and minds that shrink from too much reality. If one is open towards God, one is open also to the beauty of the world, the truth of ideas and the pain of disappointment and deformity. If one is closed up against being hurt, or blind towards one's fellow men, one is inevitably shut off from God also. Vision and vulnerability go together. Insensitivity is also an all rounder.

### **Scripture (Matthew 5:3-8)**

*How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as their inheritance. Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown to them. Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.*

### **Tuesday (Meister Eckhart)**

We must learn to free ourselves of ourselves in all our gifts, not holding on to what is our own or seeking anything, either profit, pleasure, inwardness, sweetness, reward, heaven or our own will. The more we cease to be in our own will, the more truly we begin to be in God's will. We must train ourselves in self-abandonment until we retain nothing of our own.

### **Scripture (Zephaniah 2:3, 3:12-13)**

*Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth, who obey his commands. Seek uprightness, seek humility: You may perhaps be able to find shelter on the Day of the Lord's anger. In you I shall leave surviving a humble and lowly people, and those who are left in Israel will take refuge in the name of the Lord. They will do no wrong, will tell no lies; nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths.*

### **Wednesday (St. Teresa of Avila)**

When you say 'Thy will be done', you are begging that God's will may be carried out in you, for it is *this*, and nothing else, for which you ask. You need not fear that he will give you riches or pleasures, or great honours, or any earthly good – his love for you is not so lukewarm. He wishes to reward you generously, since he gives you his Kingdom even in this life. Ask his glorious Son, who in the garden uttered this petition truthfully and resolutely. See whether the will of God was not accomplished in the trials, sufferings, insults and persecutions sent him, until at last his life was ended on the cross. I believe that the measure of our love is the measure of the cross, great or small, that we can bear.

### **Scripture (Psalm 119:57-59, 69-70,73-74)**

*My task, Lord, is to keep your word. Wholeheartedly I entreat your favour; true to your promise, take pity on me! I have reflected on my ways, and I turn my steps to your instructions. The arrogant blacken me with lies though I wholeheartedly observe your precepts. Their hearts are gross like rich fat, but my delight is in your Law. Give me understanding and I shall learn your commandments. Those who fear you rejoice at the sight of me since I put my hope in your word.*

### **Thursday (Henri Nouwen)**

Be converted to love every day. Change all your energies, all your potential, into selfless gifts for the other person. Then you yourself will be changed from within and through you God's kingdom will break into the world. On this road, you are called to be least of all, not master, to carry other people's burdens, not lay your own on them, to give freedom instead of taking it, to grow poor in order to make others rich, to take the cross upon yourself thus bringing joy to others, to die in order that others may live.

### **Scripture (Philippians 2: 3-8)**

*Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others, everyone pursuing not selfish interests but those of others. Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like us, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.*