

## PASTOR'S CORNER



*When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them.*

So begins the Sermon on the Mount – the most complete expression in the scriptures of the New Law of Grace spanning the next three chapters of the Gospel of Matthew. We missed the introduction and the Beatitudes last weekend because of The Feast of the Presentation – but it is essential to understand what we’re getting into in the Gospel these next few weeks.

Notably, Jesus is styled here as the new Moses: the new lawgiver teaching from a mountain as Moses taught from Mount Sinai. But our Lord is not reporting to the people what God has told him – he is God telling them, speaking to them directly. It had been God’s expressed desire on Mount Sinai, as he came down in the cloud and the fire, that the people might be a kingdom of priests, all of whom would speak with God. But the people refused in fear and told Moses to be their representative and mediator. Here in his incarnation, the people gather around the Lord and are now taught directly by their God, not a law destined for stone tablets, but a law to be written on their hearts.

And he begins with the Beatitudes. Like the ten commandments of the old law, the seven beatitudes with the eighth pointing to our persecution are the foundation of the new law. They structure the rest of the sermon and tell us a great deal of how the new law is different.

This new law is something fundamentally positive – not a string of thou shalt nots. It is something interior – an ethos, if you will, rather than an external ethic. It is focused on our true happiness, our blessedness, rather than simply duty. It is something we are to grow into, for the beatitudes have always been read as a spiritual journey we are called to undertake – beginning with that poverty of spirit and the recognition of our need for God and growing in them step by step. It is something prophetic – it is not something we do on our own but that the Lord works within us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As Lent approaches, I hope these few next weeks in the Sermon on the Mount can help us to understand the New Law of Grace and prepare us for the conversion to which we have been called.

In Christ, through Mary,

*Fr. Dominic David Maichrowicz, OP*