

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH, Fort Benton

ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH, Geraldine

January 29th, 2023: Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

Fr. Mohan Raj Arockia

Website: iccfb.org

Pastor

Office: 406-622-3726

Day, Month & Date	<u>Mass Schedule for -January 29th – February 05th, 2023</u>
Sun Jan 29 th	<i>Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time: 9 am Mass @ ICC and 11 am Mass @ St. Margaret's.</i>
Wed Feb 01 st	<i>12pm The Angelus, Novena & Mass @ St. Margaret's.</i>
Thurs Feb 02 nd	<i>10 am Mass @ Hospital (The Presentation of the Lord, Feast).</i>
Fri Feb 03 rd	<i>9 am Mass @ ICC (St. Blaise, Bp and Martyr).</i>
Sat Feb 04 th	<i>9 am Mass @ ICC.</i>
Sun Feb 05 th	<i>Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time: 9 am Mass @ St. Margaret's and 11 am Mass @ ICC.</i>

Reflection by Pastor: Dear Loving Sisters, Brothers and Children in Christ!

Today we begin the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus is presented as the new Moses. He presents five long discourses by Jesus, which can be seen to match the Pentateuch (the five first books of the Bible), traditionally attributed to Moses as their author and which embody the Jewish Law. Just as the Pentateuch embodies the Jewish way of life, so these discourses embody Jesus' vision of the life he proposes for us.

The Sermon on Mount is the first of these five discourses. It is not a tape recording or a verbatim record of an actual sermon or address. Rather, it is a collection of sayings and teachings focusing on the personal qualities expected of a disciple of Jesus. It is given on a mountain. Mountains are traditionally seen as holy places where God is especially present, and there are several instances in both the Hebrew and Christian Testaments where mountains feature in a significant way. Apart from today's example, we have, to give just two examples, Mount Sinai where God gave the Law to Moses and the mountain of the Transfiguration where something of Jesus' inner reality was revealed to three chosen disciples.

Jesus sat down, a position of authority, e.g. when the Pope speaks officially, he does so *ex cathedra*, sitting on his chair or throne. Jesus' audience consists of the Twelve, his other disciples and all those who wish to hear what he says.

The core of Christian living: Just as the Ten Commandments are the core of the Jewish way of life and a law to follow, so Beatitudes are the core of the Christian way of life. Yet, they are often not understood as such. In many ways, they are largely ignored as guides to Christian living, and many Christians still regard the Ten Commandments as their life guide. As a priest, I have yet to hear anyone refer to the Beatitudes in making their ‘confession’!

In the society where Jesus grew up, a good person was understood as one who kept the Law perfectly. In fact, many of them can be kept by not doing anything at all e.g. not stealing, not being violent, not doing any sexual acts, not talking about other people... A highly introverted, narrow-minded Puritan might very well be observing the Commandments to the letter. And this was where the conflict arose between Jesus and the Scribes and Pharisees.

Strictly speaking, the Beatitudes are not commandments. They are not so much things to be done, or rules to be kept, as deep-down attitudes of the mind. And, in fact, their observance is only possible with a deep love of God and of other people. They can never be kept fully – they are goals that are always calling us further. They never leave any room for complacency. One can never say about the Beatitudes what the rich man said to Jesus, namely, that he had kept all the commandments since he was young.

Sources of true happiness: Each Beatitude begins with the word “Blessed”. ‘Blessed’ is a translation of the Greek *makarios*, and the Latin, *felix*. The meaning of these words is a combination of happiness and good fortune. So we could translate either with “Happy are those...” or “Fortunate are those...”. ‘Blessed’ used in that sense is also a good rendering.

The Beatitudes must be understood in the context of the Kingdom. The Kingdom, as discussed previously, is not a place. It is that complex of relationships that exists between God and those who have totally accepted him as the Lord and guide of their lives, and who share God’s vision of what life is about. So, in the Kingdom it is not the rich, the successful and the powerful who are really happy and fortunate, but the meek and lowly. Clearly that is not the conventional way of thinking for many in our world. And that is why to enter the Kingdom requires *metanoia*, a radical change in the way we see life and its values.

This point is made forcefully by Paul in today’s Second Reading: *God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God.*

It is also made in the First Reading: *Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his commands; seek righteousness, seek humility... For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly... They shall do no wrong and utter no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths.*

A special relationship: The Beatitudes have a quality and depth which goes far beyond the moral requirements of the Ten Commandments. They call for a very special relationship with God and with the people around us. They involve not merely a personal observance of ethical rules, but a deep concern to be involved in the building up of the world we live in, helping to make it a place of truth, love, compassion, justice, freedom and peace. This is what the ‘Kingdom’ is all about. It is a completely different ball game. Am I ready for it?

<p>January 22nd, 2023 The 3rd Ordinary Sunday</p>	<p>ICC, Fort Benton: \$ 1,022 + \$ 40 (<i>Maintenance</i>) = \$ 1,062.00 St. Margaret's Church, Geraldine: \$ 1,082.00</p>
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COMPLIANCE IN SAFE ENVIRONMENT and CHILDREN'S AUDIT

The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings requires all employees to be compliant in the Safe Environment program by successfully completing a background check and by completing the training courses that are presented each year. Volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults in any capacity are required to be compliant as well.

In 2022 the Diocese partnered with Catholic Mutual Group (CMG) for the Adult Training Program. Also new this year is the "Circle of Grace" Children's Learning Program offered by the Diocese of Omaha. Barbara Haacke sent out the audit materials this week for the Safe Environment children's training program that are due back to the Diocese on May 1, 2023. I require this program to be positively promoted at all parishes and schools.

It is the responsibility of the individual parishes and schools to keep their employees and volunteers compliant in the Adult Learning Program and to maintain their compliance records. It is a good idea to run compliance reports on a monthly or quarterly basis to stay current with the diocesan requirements. Anyone who is working with children or vulnerable adults must be compliant before they begin their work. DRE's and other religious educators are required to be compliant in the Safe Environment program before they teach their classes.

Barbara Haacke is the Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator and is available to provide assistance to you or your employees/volunteers with any questions or issues you may have in maintaining your program. Her direct phone line is: 406-604-1850.

CHRISM DAY/CHRISM MASS

Day of Prayer for Priests

Thursday, March 30, 2023; 10:00am – 3:00pm

St. Bernard's Parish; Lunch will be provided at St. Bernard's Parish

Bishop Austin Vetter of the Diocese of Helena has agreed to offer a couple of presentations on priesthood for the Day of Prayer. Given that this will be the first time for Bishop Fleming to gather with all the priests, attendance at the Day of Prayer for Priests this year is mandatory. I ask all priests serving in the Diocese to note this on their agendas. The Day of Prayer for Priests will be held at St. Bernard's Parish beginning at 10:00 AM and concluding by 3:00 PM to allow for an early dinner.

The Chrism Mass: There is one Chrism Mass this year and it will be in Billings.

Thursday, March 30; 6:00pm, St. Patrick Co-Cathedral – Billings.

St. Margaret's Bulletin

Valentine plates will be put together Sunday, February 12. Please have your treats in the church hall before 10:15 as that is the time we will begin making up the Valentine Plates. After Mass everyone is encouraged to take a couple plates to deliver.

Reflection by Trish — The right intention

Sometime back I was to meet an old friend. I had very mixed feelings about this meeting. It had been several years since we had seen each other in person. At one time we were very close and then my friend moved away. I became aware through our correspondence over the years that there were many things we did not agree on. We viewed the world from different perspectives.

As I drove to the restaurant, I asked the Spirit of God to let me see what I enjoyed about this person and to not focus on the things that bothered me. I asked for insight into the goodness of this person that I felt so close to years ago. I knew this individual was very content with the way their life was going. I asked that my ears hear the goodness, my heart see the caring and love, and that I might not be distracted by our differences.

My friend was so excited to see me. We updated each other about our families. As I listened to stories about what brought happiness and joy to my friend, how my friend focused on the purpose of life, I could tell this individual's life journey was fulfilling for them even though there were great differences in our lives.

The questions we ask ourselves when dealing with other people are most important. What is our intention when we are with others? Is our intention to be supportive and recognize the goodness within them, or to see if they fit into the list of rules we have created for ourselves? Do we believe the other is a child of God? Are we open to listening with a loving heart instead listening to see if the individual fits into the boxes we think they should? Do we recognize that everyone's life journey is not like ours?

The Source of All Life created diverse people. Each individual's life experience is different, and they come from different perspectives. Everyone needs to take different turns and twists in life to find fulfillment. I know they will take a different path than I to discover their purpose in life. I am sure many people do not understand choices I make, where I focus my attention at times, or how I respond to situations. What gives me contentment and fulfillment will not work for a great number of people. What I need to do to work through difficulties in my life are not the solutions for others. Each person's journey is individual, unique, and none of us know the answers for the other.

Spirit of God, open my heart to connect with the goodness in others,

Open my mind and ears to listen with intention to be supportive.

Keep me mindful that my purpose is not to fix or change others.

