

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 1, 2026

Boasting in the Lord.

Seek justice and be humble.

Blessed be you all.

rvb.

“Apprehend God in all things,

For God is in all things.

Every single creature is full of God

And is a book about God.

Every creature is a word of God.”

-Meister Eckhart.

“Beloved Lord, Almighty God,

Through the rays of the sun,

Through the waves of the air,

Through the All-pervading Life in space,

Purify and revivify me, and, I pray,

Heal my body, heart, and soul. Amen.

-Hazrat Inayat Khan.

This is a sneak preview in preparation for Ash Wednesday, February 18. I have completed a Lenten Journey for each day of Lent which will be

included in the reflections on the scriptures I send out to you on Tuesday – here is a sample of the format for the meditations.

Daily scriptures, Haikus (17 syllables reflect the meaning and messages of the scripture readings), prayers, coping with stress, doing good deeds, and thought-provoking quotations – one day at a time. Let us begin the Resurrection Steps of Our Lenten Journey. -Roger J. Vanden Busch

We begin our Lenten journey with Jesus. Along the way, we go to an “out of the way place” to encounter scripture, haikus, prayer, and the challenge of performing two good deeds a day strengthening the muscles of our spiritual pilgrimage. May Jesus not find us sleeping, perplexed or afraid to remain at the cross. Like Jesus, God will surprise us with the Resurrection steps of our Lenten Journey.

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:12-18 – God speaks to the heart/Passion full of compassion/now be on your way.

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 – We are hollow reeds/God’s holy breath filling us/Grace builds on nature.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 – Enter God’s presence/Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving/No one else should see.

Prayer: Lent is a time to spring to action! May I not retreat into the selfish corners of my heart and soul.

Coping with stress:

- 1. Arise 15 minutes earlier in the morning – stretch, prayer of gratitude, and catch 5 minutes in the sun’s rays.**

Two good deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

1. Commit yourself to growth (Be Growth-oriented). The more you grow, the better you become.
2. Work on your negative traits. Are there any traits you dislike about yourself? It can be challenging to overhaul your character all at once. On the other hand, if you address one negative trait at a time, it is a lot more manageable and achievable.

Quotation. “There are, in every age, new errors to be rectified, and

New prejudices to be opposed.” Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

“It is in Jesus that we live, move, and have our being.” Acts 17:28.

Blessings upon your and your loved ones.

Roger J. Vanden Busch

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Reading 1

[Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13](#)

Seek the LORD, all you **humble** of the earth,
who have observed his law;
seek justice, seek humility;
perhaps you may be sheltered
on the day of the LORD's anger.

But I will leave as a remnant in your midst
a people **humble and lowly**,
who shall take refuge in the name of the LORD:
the remnant of Israel.
They **shall do no wrong**
and **speak no lies**;
nor shall there be found in their mouths
a deceitful tongue;
they shall pasture and couch their flocks
with none to disturb them.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In this reading from Zephaniah, the humble of the land are to seek the Lord. The prophet holds out the hope that the people at least may be saved from the coming storm which is about to sweep over the neighboring territory of Philistia. The humble and the lowly are the holy remnants, by whose righteous living the nation is to be saved from judgment. God is the true and faithful one amid his people and has heard the prayer of the humble – “**Blessed are the humble, the joyous, and the generous.**”

Humility.

They do not seek recognition or brag about what they have. A good person remains grounded, grateful, and aware that someone's worth is not measured by material possessions but by how they treat others. Humility keeps them approachable and genuine.

Even when they achieve success, they do not let it define them. Instead, they treat everyone with the same respect, showing that their true greatness lies in their ability to stay authentic and free of arrogance.

The Joyous who uplifts others.

Their happiness is not forced or fake; it comes from appreciating life as it is. This genuine joy has the power to uplift everyone around them, creating a more positive atmosphere.

Instead of spreading negativity, they inspire hope and optimism. Their lighthearted spirit is a reminder that joy can be found even in small, simple moments.

The Generous who expect nothing in return.

Giving without expecting something back is one of the clearest signs of genuine kindness. It may be time, attention, or support—they give because it feels right, not because they are looking for rewards.

This type of generosity strengthens relationships because it shows that their actions are pure and authentic. Others feel safe knowing that the support they receive is not conditional but sincere.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

R. (Mt 5:3) Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!

or:

R. Alleluia.

**The LORD keeps faith forever,
secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry.**

The LORD sets captives free.

R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!

or:

R. Alleluia.

**The LORD gives sight to the blind;
the LORD raises up those who were bowed down.**

**The LORD loves the just;
the LORD protects strangers.**

R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!

or:

R. Alleluia.

**The fatherless and the widow the LORD sustains,
but the way of the wicked he thwarts.**

**The LORD shall reign forever;
your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.**

R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!

or:

R. Alleluia.

Reading 2

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Consider your own calling, brothers and sisters.

Not many of you were wise by human standards,

not many were powerful,

not many were of noble birth.

Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise,
and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong,
and God chose the lowly and despised of the world,
those who count for nothing,
to reduce to nothing those who are something,
so that no human being might boast before God.
It is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus,
who became for us wisdom from God,
as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,
so that, as it is written,
"Whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord."

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

The reading from Corinthians completes the theological movement and teaching of chapter one. In Corinth, the “Vanity Fair” of the ancient world, Paul is grappling with grave and serious matters/issues/questions affecting the life of the Church. The people fail to recognize and accept Jesus as the wisdom of God as Lord and Savior through the power of the cross. It is only when we are weak and vulnerable that we are strong and invincible. Such is the paradox for Jewish religiosity and to Greek wisdom. For Paul, the cross displays God’s power. God is not foolish, but He does appear foolish to our intellectual pride. Only existence in Jesus as Lord can achieve the pinnacle of peace, justice, wisdom, and redemption. I agree that paradoxically, when we are weak and vulnerable then we are

strong and invincible, especially when the following virtues/beatitudes are deeply rooted in our character profile and practice: “Blessed are those who are Empathic and Consistent between Word and Action.”

Genuine empathy

Good people truly feel the pain and joy of others. They do not just say “I understand you;” they put themselves in someone else’s shoes and act with compassion. That ability to emotionally connect is what makes them unique and memorable in every space they inhabit.

Instead of judging or dismissing emotions, they create a safe environment where others can share what they feel. This type of empathy builds stronger relationships because it shows that they not only listen but also care deeply about the well-being of those around them.

Consistency between words and actions - Integrity.

Good people are not full of contradictions. Their words align with their actions, which makes them trustworthy. When they say something, they follow through, showing integrity in every aspect of life.

This coherence builds credibility over time. Others know they can rely on them, which is one of the most valuable traits in any relationship—whether personal or professional.

Alleluia

Matthew 5:12a

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Rejoice and be glad;
your reward will be great in heaven.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-12a

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, saying:
"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure of heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you
and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.
Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward will be great in heaven."**

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the Beatitudes were addressed to the disciples of Jesus who came to him on a mountain away from the crowds. The Beatitudes are not general hopes addressed to the world at large, and still less are they idealistic sentiments with no demand for the human being now. Rather, they are an invitation to the inner world of the Kingdom of God, a life which brings with it joy and ecstasy, but may well involve struggle, pain, and suffering. The following are a reflection/interpretation of five of the Beatitudes.

“Blessed are the poor in Spirit” – How do we practice detachment? Are you seeking simplicity, avoiding waste and the accumulation of unnecessary possessions? What does austerity mean in modern circumstances? Do we have a place for silence in our lives? What about poverty of mind, the refusal to acquire useless information?

“Blessed are the Meek” – Are we humble? What about arrogance and conceit in our lives? Do we try to understand and therefore respect others?

Are we seeking to become non-violent and gentle in spirit? Christian meekness is not weakness or lack of principles. It is a solid virtue requiring inner strength.

“Blessed are the peacemakers” – Are we promoting peace? What are we contributing in our community to human unity, to the removal of divisions and barriers? Is there a movement towards peace and harmony within my personality?

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice” – Justice and peace stand and fall together. Love is the culmination of justice, and justice is the practical expression of love. How do the demands of justice in society and in political structures enter our self-examination as we cry out for our neighbors in Minneapolis who are ruthlessly murdered, beaten, forcefully taken from their homes, some half naked, and 5-year-olds taken from their parents and out of schools. A good Samaritan from Green Bay, a graduate of Preble is murdered in cold blood execution style as he tends to a female fallen victim.

Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., called for a full investigation after a federal agent fatally shot a man who was allegedly armed in Minneapolis on Saturday,

calling the incident "incredibly disturbing." Cassidy joined a chorus of Democratic lawmakers raising questions following the shooting death of 37-year-old Minneapolis resident Alex J. Pretti, who was killed by a Border Patrol agent on Saturday. -Internet. On January 30, 2026, Congress has to decide to refuse to fund ICE. The choice is ours-Silence or Action?

“Blessed are the pure of heart” – “Purity of heart is to will one desire,” wrote Kierkegaard. Do we perpetuate deceitfulness? Purity of heart involves a passion for the authentic, genuine forms of love which are beyond mere sexuality. Harry Williams defined chastity as: “the capacity so to sift my experience as to be enlarged and enriched by it instead of being diminished or destroyed.” Inner purity is seeking a direction, an orientation, seeing God.

The beatitudes are attributes of God fleshed out by the person of Jesus and realized by the Spirit’s dynamic grace. They are the reign of God in disguise waiting to be released upon the world by the gentle and simple of hearts who choose the wisdom of God over the wisdom of the world.

Final Prayer: Father, we pray that our attitude may be one of the beatitudes who like your son, Jesus who challenges us to have a passionate heart, a

noble soul, a compassionate desire to promote diversity, equity, and inclusiveness to realize your Kingdom among us. Amen.

May you and your loved ones be blessed with Health, Happiness, and Holiness. -Roger J. Vanden Busch.