

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)  
February 1, 2026  
“Bosco’s Beatitudes”

When Jesus came on the scene in Galilee, he announced the coming of God’s kingdom, and called people to repent and believe the Good News. Jesus declared that his Father was working through him to set things right in the world. He healed the sick, cast out demons, fed the hungry, and forgave sinners. To ensure the advance of the kingdom, he called men and women to continue his work. That’s us.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught them a new way of living, beginning with the Beatitudes (Mt. 5:1-10a). Like a mountain, the Beatitudes lift us from the *base* of poverty in spirit to the *summit* of perseverance in persecution. As disciples, we are called to pattern our lives on those eight steps to Heaven.

One practical way to take up the Beatitudes is by following the example of someone who has lived them out. This weekend is the feast of Saint John Bosco who lived from 1815 to 88, and who brought the Gospel of God’s Kingdom to the bustling industrial city of Turin, Italy.

Let’s look at his life, one Beatitude at a time, to see what we can learn.

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”* Here Jesus is telling his disciples to rely on God for everything. The “poor in spirit” are those who know they are nothing without God. John Bosco was “poor in spirit,” absolutely confident in God. With nothing but faith, he found ways to feed, house, clothe, educate, and evangelize thousands of boys. Once when he wanted to build a bigger church for his boys, an associate cautioned, “We’re broke!” To which Bosco replied, “Have we ever begun anything with money in our pockets?”

He trained boys to live by faith, which is why 40 of them volunteered to spend several months caring for victims of a cholera epidemic that swept through Turin in 1854. John encouraged them to believe in God's protective power, and not one caught the disease. What is your faith calling you to do these days?

*"Blessed are they who mourn . . . Blessed are the merciful."* Disciples "mourn" over their sins and the desperate circumstances of the poor. Grief over the sorry condition of Turin's youth moved Bosco to begin informal Sunday afternoon gatherings, where boys could enjoy games, hikes, picnics, prayer, and teaching. He called these gatherings "the Oratory," in 1841, and within five years, they were drawing 400 homeless teenagers a week.

Bosco never required boys to go to Confession. Instead, his magnetic kindness drew them to the Confessional, where they experienced God's merciful love. Do you think about how you can be a messenger of mercy to others?

*"Blessed are the meek."* The meek are not the weak. Meekness is not passively giving way to obstacles in the Christian life. A meek person instead faces difficulties with strength and trust. For John Bosco, meekness meant working humbly and patiently for four decades to overcome a constant stream of challenges. Establishing the Salesian Society of priests in 1859 was especially difficult. The State resisted his foundation and the Church only reluctantly supported it, but his labors paid off, and today 15,270 religious men and women serve the youth in this Order. How do we deal with the challenges of life?

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."* Only God can make us righteous or holy, but we have to desire it. John Bosco taught the boys in his care that only God through Christ and his Church can satisfy their deepest

desires. If we do his will through prayer, study, and service, he will make us saints, and use our witness and words to set things right in our world. Do you hunger for God?

*“Blessed are the pure of heart.”* Here Jesus is teaching the importance of being single-hearted and pure in intention. John Bosco made the choice to be a celibate priest at age nine, when he had a vision about rescuing rambunctious boys. He took in thousands of homeless boys, giving them a home, an education, and a chance to know Jesus. His heart belonged to Jesus. To whom do our hearts belong?

*“Blessed are the peacemakers.”* John Bosco trained rowdy boys to be polite young men. He addressed their concerns and helped them grow, teaching the way of peace through justice. He even won the confidence of a city official who asked, “Why can’t the State have the respect and love of its citizens, as you do from your students?” Bosco replied that he relied on *appeals to the heart* rather than *threats and punishments* to train the young. Are we peacemakers or peacebreakers in our community?

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted.”* John Bosco encountered serious opposition to his work. Government officials blocked his projects and the media mocked him. Even fellow priests persecuted him. Two of them once tried to have John abducted and driven to an insane asylum. Instead, he turned the tables on them, by tricking them into the carriage and having the driver cart them off to the asylum! Don Bosco responded to persecution with faith, courage, strength, and humor. How do we respond to attacks on our Faith?

Saint John Bosco, pray for us as we talk the way of the Beatitudes. God bless you.