



Reflection from Fr. Don Farnan

This Sunday and for several weeks until Lent, we are presented with Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount*. It starts with *The Beatitudes*. They offer us an attitude for being blessed or happy in God's kingdom. The Greek word "*Makarios*," which is used here, is different from the gleeful, light-hearted notions we usually have when we think of being blessed or happy. *Makarios* has more to do with being wholesome, holy, or spiritually healthy; it has to do with extending or enlarging. Therefore, the comfort, mercy, and identity as God's children of which Jesus speaks gets expanded in abundance to His blessed ones. As we hear, again, Christ's most famous sermon, let it inspire us to carry the same attitude into our encounters.

This attitude of being holy, happy, healthy, and whole in Christ should offer us incentive as servant-leaders in our parishes. I see it in the Saint James Growth Committee and in activities around Saint Therese Little Flower. Both communities are finding ways to build up God's kingdom, both parochially and within our diocese, interiorly through personal growth and in exterior ways that benefit society. The notion of growth is key in the images Jesus used to teach: He spoke about a mustard seed, about a farmer sowing seeds, and about seeds of faith. This seedbed can help us to understand our purpose in carrying forth the Gospel mission.

Some of the growth (expansion, extension, enlargement) is simply what diocesan leaders reminded us through the planning process of recent years. Our faith-communities need to be self-sustaining: to grow in membership census, enrollment for programs, attendance at Masses, reception of sacraments, etc. While growing our numbers, we also need to grow the important impact that urban parishes provide others, e.g., leadership in addressing tough topics like racism, immigration, poverty, sexism, homelessness, and other societal injustices. We are also challenged to increase in personal spirituality, i.e., our relationship with God and one another by directing the fire of God's love within us to reach out in service of others, or by translating faith into action that creates hope for less fortunate brothers and sisters of ours.

All these things flow from the Sermon on the Mount where we are commissioned to be salt of the earth and light for our world. Let's listen again and be inspired to live a little differently because of the wisdom it brings us.

*Peace,
Fr. Don*