

TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 06. February 9, 2020. Epiphany 5

Last Sunday because of Candlemas, we missed the regular Gospel reading for the 4th Sunday after Epiphany. It was the first twelve verses of Chapter five of Matthew's gospel - the Beatitudes, which are considered the foundation text of Christian ethics.

I've always looked at the Beatitudes not so much as a set of rules but rather as "descriptors" of the type of persons we should be on the way to becoming – the "graduation criteria" so to speak, of the school of Christian formation. And thinking about them this way makes it very clear just how counter-cultural they actually are, and how daunting a challenge they are to Christians in this day and age.

Imagine, for a moment, what the reaction would be were a school to explicitly incorporate the Beatitudes into its published list of 'expected learning results'. They would run something like this:

"Our School prepares students to be individuals,

- who are poor in spirit: i.e. are acutely aware of their own weaknesses and limitations;
- who mourn: i.e. carry as their own burden the suffering of others.
- who are meek: i.e. not self-assertive, as willing – or more willing – to follow and to obey as they are to lead, do not fight back..
- who hunger and thirst for righteousness: i.e. place goodness and justice before wealth, security or personal happiness.
- who are merciful: i.e. always forgive – 'bleeding-hearts', in other words;
- who are pure in heart: i.e. naïve, unwilling to play the game to get ahead;
- who are peacemakers: i.e. not all that interested in winning, willing to compromise;
- and who will receive all sorts of rewards once they're dead, but in the meantime, they will be hated and reviled by almost everyone, for which they will also be blissfully grateful.

Honestly, would you send your children to such a school?

Now, I admit, I had to smile to myself as I concocted the above list, but in all seriousness, I also find it troubling because it brings home the fact that our schools promise to form individuals who are pretty much the opposite of the above in almost every respect – because that's what our culture today demands!