

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Matthew 5:1-12

### *Spiritual Exercises: Achieving Fitness for the Kingdom of Heaven*

This Sunday our gospel readings begin the “Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus’ homilies on what it means to be a disciple. We have the compelling and attractive image of Jesus as the rabbi, the teacher. He reminds us of Moses who called the Israelites to live a life according to God’s law.

To fully enjoy Matthew’s Gospel reading for the beginning of Ordinary Time, imagine yourself in a verdant, fertile field with a high hill a short distance ahead. You are with a group of people who have come to know of Jesus and are seeking to hear his message. You, and they, are believers, interested in learning about the kingdom of heaven and leading a spiritual life dedicated to its reward. However, you find that lifestyle, and its discipline, tough. You need Jesus and you need his help. Jesus is up ahead of your group and he takes a seat on the hill and you and your companions draw near.

You can see Jesus. He is a handsome Jewish man. His voice is strong and clear. You sit down. You are comfortable. You take a deep breath to hear Jesus’ message. “This is how you achieve spiritual fitness for God’s kingdom:”

#### *Daily Exercises for Entry into My Father’s Kingdom*

1. Draw on my values and attitudes in your daily suffering.
2. Know I am blessing you in your poverty, in your sadness, and in your hunger.
3. Be blessed, comforted, joyful and glad in my love for you.

“If you choose to live a life according to the values that I present to you, and with my never-failing help, then your reward will be great in the kingdom of heaven. You will be a blessed, and you will be a blessing to a world in need of me. In eternity, you will take your place with God, our Father, in the place we have reserved for you.”

Dr. Rosemary Murphy