

IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, when Jesus says that those who mourn are blessed, I suspect most of us almost always think of those who are grieving the death of a family member or friend. We mourn at funerals, after all. We sometimes refer to the people who've gathered as mourners.

Pope Francis, however, as he so often does, guides us to a different

and more encompassing understanding of who might mourn, what it means to mourn and the comfort assured by Jesus to those who mourn, or us who mourn.

It has been customary for all recent popes to speak before a large gathering of people, often from throughout the world, on Wednesdays. That custom was impeded dramatically by the pandemic, but last February, before the Vatican was essentially closed to visitors, Francis spoke in his General Audience address about this second Beatitude.

The act of mourning, of grieving, he explained, is active. There is pain, there are tears, if not outwardly, then inwardly. This mourning has two aspects: grieving death or physical suffering; and "tears shed over sin – for our sin, when the heart bleeds for the pain of having offended God and one's neighbor.

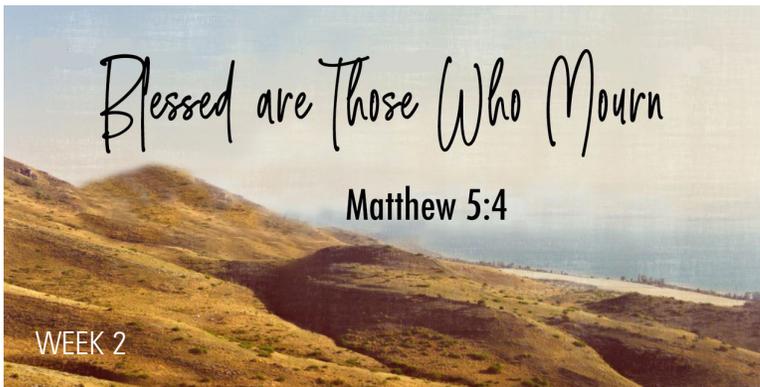
And with that Pope Francis opens us to a startling new awareness of "those who mourn" and the blessing we might attain.

"There are those who mourn the evil done, the good omitted, the betrayal of the relationship with God," Francis said. "This is mourning for not having loved, which springs from having

an end in itself. Pope Francis, rather, refers to "the beauty of penitence, the beauty of tears, the beauty of contrition!" He continues, "As always, Christian life finds its best expression in mercy. Wise and blessed are they who welcome the pain linked to love, because they will receive the consolation of the Holy Spirit — that God always forgives, even the worst sins. God always forgives: let us never forget this. The problem is in us, that we tire of asking for forgiveness, we become wrapped up in ourselves and we do not ask for forgiveness. This is the problem; but He is there to forgive."

The blessing assured to those who mourn because of sin is realized, maybe most powerfully, in the sacrament of Reconciliation. A significant stepping stone in our Christian reckoning might be an extensive examination of conscience and celebration of this sacrament – confessing, yes; expressing grief, yes; but, also, necessarily, rejoicing in God's mercy! At St. Anne Reconciliation is celebrated every Saturday morning at 9 a.m.

"If we always keep in mind that God 'does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities,' (Psalm 103: 10), we live in mercy and in compassion, and love appears in us," Pope Francis said in conclusion. "May the Lord grant us to love in abundance, to love with a smile, with closeness, with service and also with grief." **TL**



the life of others at heart. Here one weeps because one does not correspond to the Lord who loves us so much, and we are saddened by the thought of the good not done; this is the meaning of sin. They say, 'I have wounded the one I love,' and it pains them to tears.

"God be blessed if these tears come!

"This is the theme of one's own errors to face, difficult but vital. Let us think of the weeping of St. Peter, which leads him to a new and far truer love: they are tears which purify, which renew. Peter looked to Jesus and wept: his heart was renewed. Unlike Judas, who did not accept that he had made a mistake and, poor man, took his own life. Understanding sin is a gift from God, it is the work of the Holy Spirit. We, by ourselves, are unable to understand sin. It is a grace we must ask for: Lord, may I understand the evil I have done or that I can do. After we have understood this, there comes the grief of repentance."

Grief over sin, of course, is not