“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3)."

Who are the poor in spirit? For Jesus, the poor are those who are without material possessions and whose confidence is in God.

- Isaiah describes them this way: “the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners” (Isa 61:1).
- Zephaniah describes them as the “humble of the land, who have observed his law.” They are encouraged to seek justice and humility. (Zep 2:3)

The blessed are favored by God and although their present condition may seem less than ideal, this will be reversed in the future (Note to Luke 6:20-26 “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3b). “The central message of Jesus’ preaching is the coming of the kingdom of heaven and the need for repentance, a complete change of heart and conduct, on the part of those who are to receive this great gift of God” (Introduction to Matthew). Chapter 13 of Matthew’s Gospel is full of explanations of the kingdom of heaven.

- In the parable of the sewer and the seeds, the teaching of Jesus will connect with those who listen and have a conversion of heart. Although much seed will fall on deaf ears, “the seed that falls on good ground bears fruit in extraordinarily large measure. The point of the parable is that, in spite of some failure because of opposition and indifference, the message of Jesus about the coming of the kingdom will have enormous success” (Footnote to 13:3-8).
- In the parable of the weeds and the wheat (13:24-30), we see the two growing along side of each other. Satan, the enemy, sews weeds, in the hope the Master will pull the weeds and destroy wheat in the process. When it is harvest time and not before, the wheat will be collected, and the weeds burned. “The Kingdom of heaven is a present, although mixed reality, that will be perfectly realized at the end of history” (Hahn, Theological Dictionary 511).
- The parables of the mustard seed (13:31-32) and the yeast (13:33) are very similar. The kingdom starts our very small but will have a marvelous expansion. When Peter preaches on Pentecost and 3,000 choose repentance and baptism, we see how exponentially the kingdom of heaven may grow. We can look to the worldwide concern for George Floyd and the call throughout the world to end racism as an example of how quickly, the kingdom can grow.
- “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it” (13:45-46). Certainly, with his death for our salvation, Jesus shows us that he will give his very life for he considers us fine pearls, each and every one of us.

We all share in the responsibility for helping to build the kingdom of heaven in our lifetimes.

- When we respond to the needs of the poor, we help to build up the kingdom of heaven. “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me’ (Mt 25:36-37).
- Those who have taken to the streets peacefully to protest the killing of George Floyd, very much hunger for justice. “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied” (Mt 5:6).
- When we comfort those who are mourning the death of a loved one, we help to build the kingdom.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3). How might your heart need to change so that you can help to build the kingdom of heaven in this life?