Beginning today and for the next four Sundays
Jesus formally announces his vision of what he calls "The Kingdom of Heaven"
Chapters five, six and seven, in Matthew, are what has been called
"The Sermon on the Mount."
That Sermon is the first of five great teachings of Jesus.
Those teachings correspond to the first 5 books of the Hebrew Scriptures.
Those Old Testament books describe how the Israelite people
were to be in relationship wth God and with one another.
The five teachings of Jesus describe a radically new relationship
between God and all people — a deeper, more intimate relationship.

Our Catholic tradition teaches that we have been swept into that moment.
We are on that mountain listening to Jesus
The past become the present.

I want to highlight a few words that are very important to Matthew's telling
of the Good News.

Begins with words we've all heard many times:
"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs in the kingdom of heaven."

The word "BLESSED" in our translation
is heaped with all sorts of churchy connotations.

"Father, will you bless me — give me your blessing"
At Eucharist we say: "Jesus took bread, took of cup, he BLESSED them."

Blessing water or oil or . . .
Is that what makes them holy?
Or are they, by their nature, a blessing and our words call attention to
what already is true?

At the end of Mass, when we're dismissed, notice what I say:
"Remember that you are baptized and blessed . . ."
A reminder of what already is, so we can live it during the week ahead.

Blessed = truly happy, envied, admired, highly favored, chosen, esteemed,
smiled on, honored.
The great reversal

"Kingdom of heaven"
"Your reward will be great in heaven"

Matthew never uses the word "God" out of deference to the Jews.
It's not about a reward that comes after your life here is over.
God smiles on those who suffer for right relationship;
Righteous = right relationship with God, self, others and all creation

It’s all about your motivation.
It’s not just any suffering - mourning,
but suffering taken on (i.e. endured, embraced) out of love and
out of desire to be in right relationship.

Much of what Donald Trump says and does seems to be antithetical to the spirit
of today's readings, especially this Gospel message.

• Exaggerated gestures and claims building a wall
• Stopping immigration of desperate people
  James Martin, S.J.—
  "The hijackers on the planes that crashed into the World Trade
  Center, the Pentagon and in Shanksville, Pa., were from Saudi Arabia. The
  rest were from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Lebanon. None of
  those countries are on Mr. Trump’s visa ban list."
• Unsubstantiated claims a massive voter fraud
• Highly inflated rhetoric:

  "I will fight for you with every breath in my body
  and I will never, ever let you down."

  "America will start winning again . . . Winning like never before.

  "To all Americans in every city near and far, . . . hear these words:
  You will never be ignored again."

  "I will be the greatest jobs producer that God ever created."

Story about the wise man who was ejected from a dinner party
because he was dressed in rags and tatters.
He left, and returned in sumptuous, silken garments,
borrowed but just right for the gathering.
Of course he was well received.
Then after a while someone noticed him sitting on the floor
behind a potted tree, spooning food down the sleeve of his garment.
The host came over, furious. “What in the world are you doing?”
“Well,” said the wise man, “obviously it is not me who was invited to the party
but my clothes. I am letting them enjoy the dinner.”

We must be willing to let go of who we are
so that we can become what we might be.

Jesus is inviting us to be authentic.