

Cycle A Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1, Wis 12:13, 16-19

There is no god besides you who have the care of all, that you need show you have not unjustly condemned. For your might is the source of justice; your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all. For you show your might when the perfection of your power is disbelieved; and in those who know you, you rebuke temerity. But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us; for power, whenever you will, attends you. And you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind; and you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins.

Responsorial Psalm, Ps 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

R. (5a) Lord, you are good and forgiving.

You, O LORD, are good and forgiving, abounding in kindness to all who call upon you. Hearken, O LORD, to my prayer and attend to the sound of my pleading.

R. Lord, you are good and forgiving.

All the nations you have made shall come and worship you, O LORD, and glorify your name. For you are great, and you do wondrous deeds; you alone are God.

R. Lord, you are good and forgiving.

You, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and fidelity. Turn toward me, and have pity on me; give your strength to your servant.

R. Lord, you are good and forgiving.

Reading II, Rom 8:26-27

Brothers and sisters: *The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.* And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will.

Gospel, Mt 13:24-43 or 13:24-30

Jesus proposed another parable to the crowds, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, 'First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.' He proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.'" He spoke to them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened."

All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to them only in parables, to fulfill what had been said through the prophet: I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world.

Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." He said in reply, "He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. *Whoever has ears ought to hear.*"

“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done. On earth as it is Heaven.” How many times have we prayed those words? Each of us could easily say, “thousands of times at least...too many to count.” But, how many times have we recognized the answer to those prayers?

You see, since the death and resurrection of Christ, the Kingdom of Heaven has begun and is here in our midst. I know because I have recognized I am living in the kingdom. About 48 years ago, I was introduced to a south side Irish Catholic family, the Rocks. Many of us from this family are here in Michigan City this week celebrating GG’s 90th birthday. I blame her and Monsignor Kiran for me becoming a Deacon. As the story goes, when I dropped Pat from our 1st date, her mother asked, “so what Parish is he from?” “Well, Mom, he not from a Parish...he’s Presbyterian.” I know GG gathered her children and they started praying for me. I told her she went a bit overboard...Not only did I become Catholic, now I am a Deacon! Well, GG and her beloved Bob had 6 children and 16 Grandchildren, and now have 11 Great Grandchildren, with another on the way...she is still counting them. And GG is still praying for us all, every morning before she eats breakfast!! I believe we are living the answer to her prayers. I recognized early on there was a strong Catholic community surrounding the Rock family. I knew I had become part of something special...that’s the kingdom of God.

Today’s Gospel tells us what the Kingdom is like. And, the readings say that God loves us so much that He is forgiving, merciful, slow to anger and abounding in kindness. He is lenient and permits repentance for our sins. He gives us the Holy Spirit who comes to our aid, interceding and even praying for us with inexpressible groanings. The implications of His love, however, are a real challenge for us. *“Whoever has ears ought to hear.”*

The parables today illustrate the growth of the Kingdom of Heaven. But if we were listening closely, we didn't hear about a picture of content that would make us comfortable. The field sown with weeds depicts a Kingdom with both righteous people and sinners. A tiny seed sowed in a field grows into a shrub that attracts undesirable birds. What could Jesus mean by these parables? Where is the mighty and merciful God in a Kingdom filled with sinners and undesirables? If we are honest with ourselves, in our hearts we don't believe that there is room in the Kingdom of Heaven for sinners like murderers, drug dealers, terrorists or other lawless people. The Kingdom must be only for the righteous and maybe for those whose sins are minor. We are afraid to live with the lawless and fear what they will do to us or how they will influence our families. These parables are not easy to accept.

I would like to tell you about a friendship my wife Pat and I formed at our home Parish St Brendan's in Cumming, GA with a man named Myron [Shultes]....God rest his soul, Myron died a couple of years ago. I am not going to share anything that Myron wouldn't say himself. To many of us who knew him, Myron was quite a character and loved to tell anyone who would listen about his wild life. I will never forget the 1st time we met Myron as we brought him Communion. He was extremely sick, laying on a bed in the living room of his daughter's house. He thought he was dying and nothing I saw contradicted that. He looked very old...much older than you GG☺...but later I was stunned to find out he was in his 50's. Myron lived a hardscrabble life that finally caught up with him. Nearing the end, he reached back into his childhood Catholic faith and called for a priest. He liked to say he thought the priest was totally shocked hearing his confession ...let's just say there was some truth in everything Myron said. We found Myron to be a gentle and caring soul...with a streak of mischief in him. Over weeks and months we saw a tiny seed of faith rekindle in Myron and blossom. Amazingly, he responded to treatment and his health improved. We saw how he touched our St Brendan's community and how we touched him. I was surprised how many people came

to know Myron. His special gift I think was with the Rosary Group that visited the nursing home a few blocks from his house. I heard about the little old lady with Alzheimer's that he took care of during the prayers...she would only listen to him. You see, Myron was one of those weeds that God wouldn't pull out...and he was transformed into good wheat. He had a tiny seed of faith that grew in him...he became a caring man who shared God's love with many people. I think this is what Jesus was talking about in the parables today.

Jesus tells us today that God thinks differently than we do. God knows that if we sinners are expelled now from the Kingdom, many people who are basically good will be thrown out before we choose to repent. There will be a time for separation and judgment, but that time is not now. Jesus says that we have to not only to live in the Kingdom of Heaven with sinners, but we have to show them the same love and concern that we show everyone else. God has a plan and the Holy Spirit will show us the way. Understand too, the presence of sinners doesn't compromise the Kingdom. On the contrary, it provides us many opportunities to share the love of Jesus with generosity and forgiveness.

That's the love GG is sharing every day...Happy Birthday GG! God bless you.

“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven.” *Whoever has ears ought to hear.*