

The Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time A - Three simple Parables. Three tremendous sources of encouragement for us.

July 19, 2020.

Jesus continues the same theme of seed-sowing this Sunday with **the parable of the weeds and the wheat**. *Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like the farmer who sowed wheat, then an enemy came and sowed weeds...." The weeds and the wheat grew together. "Let us get rid of the weeds," said his workers when the weeds and the wheat were still tiny plants. "Better not," said the farmer, "you might lose some of the wheat too. We will wait until they are ready for harvesting when we're sure we know what is weed and what is wheat. Then we'll get rid of the weeds."* (Matthew 13:24-30) The Kingdom of Heaven is like the School where we send our children to learn and to grow. In the school there are children who may not have the opportunity to experience basic human values. Perhaps, they have been raised in violent destructive households. They may have witnessed people getting hurt, things stolen, foul language used, terrible things happened. These children may have gone through some rough edges. Should the principal throw the children from dysfunctional homes out before they cause serious problems, or should he give them the opportunity to learn basic values from the school and their classmates? Yes, children need to be removed from the mainstream if they do something that threatens the welfare or even life of other children, but they are not going to be removed if they have not offended gravely, family interviews, counselling, maybe, because the children are still young and have so much to learn and grow.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like the life of every person. There is wheat and weed in each of us. Should God destroy us because of the weed in us? Or should he give us time? Perhaps that which is weed in us can be overtaken by that which is wheat. A strong prayer life goes a long way in preventing serious sin. The Divine Farmer isn't ready to give up on the crop. We should not give up on ourselves. God knows that what may appear to be weed is in reality wheat. While taking communion to shut-ins in Fort McKay, I met the son of one of the shut-ins who had a drinking problem which was destroying himself and his family. Through prayer and the determination to change his life and through his own openness to the grace of God, he went for help. He first became a member of AA. Then he was active in helping others. During the last visit in 2013 before my stroke, he was dry. Yes he was an alcoholic, but his condition now has resulted in virtue overcoming vice. He helps others. God did not give up on him. He did not give up on himself. What looked like weed, the disease of alcoholism, turned out to be wheat as he brings God's healing to other alcoholics.

The parable of the mustard seed. *"And Jesus said, behold the mustard seed. It is the smallest of seeds yet it grows into a large bush."* (Matthew 13:31-32). How do we learn to read? Most of us start with letters. First we learn the sound of the letters, then we put them together and learn how to spell words. We even learn new words. We put the words together and learn new concepts to reinforce what we learn. In very small steps, we go from the alphabets to reading newspapers, magazines, novels, etc. It all begins in a small way with the letters. The Kingdom of God is like a child learning the alphabets. Time goes on, parents and teachers work with the child, and the child's ability to read grows so well that the child becomes a professor of English Literature. And so it is with the Kingdom of God. Great-Grandparents taught their children their prayers. They brought them to Church and taught them with their lives to value their relationship with the Lord. And their children became parents and did the same. And their children are the Moms and Dads of our parish. **The Church is full of good Christian men and woman, people of all walks of life, even priests, all living the values of the Kingdom of God, the spiritual realities of life.** We teach the ABC's of religion to our children. We have faith that the Kingdom of God will spread through them. So, do not wonder if anything is getting

through to the children. Trust in God. If a child who learns his letters can become a professor of English Literature, a child who learns the simplest lessons of faith can sure become a great force of love for the Kingdom of God. **Say prayers with our children. Allow God to turn the tiny mustard seed into a great plant.**

The parable of the yeast. *Jesus said: "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."* (Matthew 13:33). As bakers know, bread does not rise if it has no yeast. In some recipes when the yeast is not mixed well with the flour the result is something tough and chewy. Wherever Christianity is alive and well, we know the Kingdom of God is very active. Christianity has spread throughout history and had a great influence on Western and Eastern culture. It may not always be identified with society, but it elevates society and culture, much like that yeast that helps the bread to rise but also needs to spread out to be effective. **We need "yeast"** especially in our time when a rising tide of secularism threatens to overwhelm the religious impulse. The secularist ideology teaches that sufficient amounts of wealth, pleasure, power, honour or reputation will make us happy. When we do that, we warp ourselves, turning our lives defensively inward, living in a very small spiritual space, like bread without yeast. But when we place ourselves in the divine centre, it is like adding yeast to the flour, we breathe the air of real spiritual freedom. No longer cramped fearfully around the "body," we can move into the wide expanse of the divine will, following God however he prompts us. And this state of affairs, this great soul, is simultaneously alluring in its beauty and terrifying in its demand. **As Christians we are called to go everywhere and proclaim the Gospel; by doing so, we are spreading the "leaven" throughout society that helps all of society to "rise," spiritually and culturally**

The parable of the weeds and wheat, the parable of mustard seed, and the parable of yeast: Three simple parables. Three simple stories. Three tremendous sources of encouragement for us.