

The Paper Pulpit

(Reflections from the Pastor)

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

This week's scripture reading: Mt. 13: 44-52

This Sunday, the Gospel contains three parables. In each one of them, Jesus talks about the Kingdom of Heaven. When he preached these parables to the people, he used the word "Kingdom" three consecutive times. Perhaps the reason was to help those people understand what he was talking about. We know, more or less, what the worldly kingdoms are like. Let us not get confused. The Lord is talking about another kind of kingdom, a kingdom that is not of this world. He talks about the Kingdom of Heaven that each one of us, if we want to, can reach. The first and second parables are, in effect, saying that the most precious things in life are to know God and to live according to the Gospel. Through Jesus and the Gospel we come to know and understand what is the real meaning of life and what are the most important things in life.

This brings us to the third parable today. While the first and second parables speak of the total commitment and dedication which are the ideal of every follower of Christ, this third parable helps to put our two feet firmly back on the ground. While the ideals are valid and still beckon us, they must not lead us into any form of elitism. This parable reminds us that the Church and even the Kingdom in the process of its evolution is full of all kinds of people. Our Church is a Church of both saints and sinners. And we might say it is primarily for sinners. "*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners*" (Mark 2:17). The role of the Church is to accept into its bosom "*the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame*" (Luke 14:21) and lead them to the treasure and the pearl of great price.

The lesson of this parable is similar to that of the weeds growing up with the wheat, namely, that the kingdom is a mixed body of saints and sinners. There will be always be a temptation on the part of some who feel they are more "faithful" to separate themselves from the "bad eggs", from the "weeds;" but Jesus is here telling us that that is the work of God in His own good time. In the meantime, it is for us to learn to be tolerant, compassionate and understanding of those who seem to fall far below the requirements of the Gospel and the Kingdom. And, as we said in discussing the parable of the weeds, there are very few of us who are not a mixture of the good and the bad. Judgment is for later. Right now, we are to use the time given to us to go in search of the treasure and the pearl of great price, of the gift to be able to identify with Jesus, and to help others in the same search.

Reverence in church:

A few folks have approached me recently about talking in the church. I am guilty of that myself as well as talking in the sacristy, which can be distracting especially to those who sit on the west side of the church. We have a great space outside the transitional room for camaraderie and conversation. Out of respect for those who wish to have time in church for quiet prayer and reflection, please keep talking to the gathering space.

Cleaning in church:

Just a gentle reminder to place the music books neatly back in the rack and to check the pew area before you leave for any clutter that may be left behind. If we all took just 5-10 seconds each week it would help keep the church neat and clean. Thank you!

Mass Servers:

Just a reminder about the Mass Server tubing party on Wednesday, August 13th. We will begin with morning Mass and then head to the Chrystal River for tubing. Please see Deacon Rich or Fr. Jim for details.

God's Blessings, Fr. Jim Trempe