

Reflecting

On Sunday's Readings

Weed among the wheat

16th Sunday of Ordinary Time – July 19, 2020

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19; Romans 8:26-27; Matthew 13:24-43

Rev. Mr. Peter B. Swan



For some of us, life can become ordinary and routine. We can easily fall into habits and patterns. In the winter we yearn for the days when we can cook outdoors. For some of us, that has become routine. We need to eat several times a day. That too, can become routine. Many of us have a house, a car and other possessions. At first they are very special to us. We might take pictures of them and show them to friends and relatives. Before long though, we simply just use them, paying little or no attention to them. The first time we hear a new song from our favorite group or singer, we might download it but after the sixth or seventh playing, it becomes routine as well. We don't listen carefully any more.

The parables in the gospel can become ordinary and routine as well. After we hear the words, "The kingdom of heaven is like," we stop listening. We've heard that one before. We know how it ends, so let's move on.

Yes, Life can be ordinary. Even the recent events that has occurred during these last three to four months because of the Corona Virus has become more or less routine. For me reaching for my mask as soon as I step outdoors has become a "New Normal." But, deep within us though, there is a deep desire to escape from the ordinary. Somewhere deep down inside we hunger for something new and fresh, for holiness and peace, for something not so ordinary. God uses ordinary means to bring the extraordinary into our lives. The parables may be familiar, but they are so **extraordinary**.

Most of us have problems with our yards. We'll mulch and put down commercial products to keep the weeds out and have that perfect garden. But it never seems to be that way. No matter how hard we try, it never achieves perfection and we have to accept the fact and the reality that our yard will never win the 'Yard of the Month' award, leave alone getting into the pages of Better Homes and Gardens.

Keeping the dandelions out of our yard, or the weeds out of our garden is hard work. The weeds grow up together with the wheat. Sometimes they get so big that we can't really pull them out without damaging the vegetables and flowers around them.

Sometimes we work or go to school with those weeds, and sometimes they're in our very own families. We can't get away from them or their influence. Nor do we judge them. We simply wait for the harvest and allow God to do the weeding and the judging. That is the reality of life as well. Jesus tells us that we can expect weeds along with our good plants throughout our lives. He tells his disciples that in this world evil will exist along with the good. That's life and we have to deal with that reality. All of us experience good and bad in ourselves. Especially recently with all of the violence that is occurring throughout our communities, cities and our country. Yes, we strive to do good and to live a life pleasing to God, but we all fail at times and yes, we all sin. Yes, we all have weeds in the garden of our life. So, what do we do about it?

Where our society is concerned, Jesus again gives us the answer. ***"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."*** We have to be the yeast of our society. It is our task as followers of Christ to be active in our society to eventually leaven the whole batch. I know it's easy to say, "What can one person do?" But that's exactly it. Change has to start with one person, with one act, with one idea, with taking that one step. Change has to start with you and me. In the Archdiocese of St. Louis there was a man named Tony. He was the head chef at one of the larger hospitals in the city. It used to bother him that so much food was thrown away every night that had never been touched. So, one night Tony gathered up the surplus food and took it down along the Mississippi riverfront and began distributing it to the folks living in dark crevices and sewer openings along the river. Over the years this single act grew and grew. More and more people became involved in the work. Tony was ordained a deacon and continued his ministry to the homeless. By the time of his death, Tony's ministry was feeding hundreds every night and involved people from all over the St. Louis metropolitan area. Many hospitals and restaurants were contributing their surplus food each night. Many people were sending money for the ministry. All of this happened without one word of

publicity, without one appeal for funds or help. It all happened because one man had an idea and felt a need to help his community and his fellow human beings who were in need. It all happened when that one man took that one step.

What am I doing to be the yeast in my society? We have so many problems facing us today that it may seem overwhelming. Where do I start? What problem is most important? Is it the condition of our schools? Is it the crime in our neighborhood? Is it racism or injustice or the disturbing reality that the line outside our SVDP pantry is getting longer and longer week after week? “What can I do?” you ask. Pick one - any one – but pick one and do something! Maybe it’s the sin of abortion, or the death penalty, maybe it is the sin of racism or injustice or the pornography in our media. Surely there is something out there that rings a bell for you, something that makes you click, something that really bites you and ticks you off. We can all follow the example of Deacon Tony and start doing something, no matter how small. So, what can I do you say? Fancy you asked. How about beginning by reading the USCCB published article titled, **“Open Wide Our Hearts.”** It’s an article about what and how we as Christians, how we as Catholics, how we as educated human beings can and should do to fight and rid racism and the injustice from our society.

We have a belief in our society that you can fix anything by throwing money at it. That’s not the answer here. It takes personal involvement to be yeast. Deacon Tony spent almost no money in his ministry - it was hands on. That is what it takes. We have to become personally involved in our world to make it a better place, not only for us, but for those who will be coming behind us. We owe it to them. To be true followers of Jesus, we have to pick up our own cross and walk the walk.

Where our personal life is concerned, we all have good plants and weeds in our life. Our job as followers of Christ is to try for that perfect Better Homes and Gardens garden. Our job is to recognize the fact that there will always be weeds of sin cropping up in our life. **We need to mulch with the Sacraments, nurture and fertilize with prayer and**

weed out with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Our personal life will never be perfect, just as our society will never be perfect. That does not mean that we stop trying. We all need to plant that mustard seed of Faith and nourish it so that it can grow and grow towards perfection.

As we continue with our liturgy and as we approach this table to receive Christ physically and for some spiritually, let us ask our Heavenly Father to give us the ability to notice the extraordinary in the ordinary things of life. The wisdom to appreciate the kingdom of God as it grows in us and around us. Let us pray to the God of Justice, to give us the courage to admit our sins and failings, to give us the wisdom to seek his mercy and reconciliation with our brothers and sisters; to give us the strength to continue crying out to him for the healing of our nation until it fulfills its commitment to recognize that we are all created equal and in His Holy image. For the courage to sing aloud, **“Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me,”** and as always, let us ask him to guide our thoughts, our feelings and our actions.

As we go forth from this Eucharist today, let us resolve to take on the task of doing something about a problem in our society and to do something in our personal life to draw us all closer to Jesus. To be that yeast in our society. God has given each of us unique gifts and talents. He gave them to us so that we can in turn use them to help others in need. **“Freely we have received, freely we must give!”** How are you going to use your gifts and talents to help that brother and that sister who is sitting next to you? How are you going to be the yeast in your society? With confidence, with hope, we realize the Lord who sees all, will in the wisdom of his time separate and remove the weed from the wheat.

The Lord is on Watch. He is always near. The Lord is my Shepherd. I walk with no fear!

May the Lord bless each and every one of you.

