

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

I wouldn't say that my garden is a particularly big garden, neither would I call it a particularly small garden, for me it is about just right. Sometimes I think it would be good to have a bit more space for planting but then I remember the extra work and those weeds! This leaves me somewhat puzzled by the agrarian advice in our gospel today and the wisdom of leaving the weeds in situ, although, I must admit, that it is sometimes tempting to let the angels deal with it! However I know that if I followed this advice it wouldn't be long before my garden became all weeds. Further reading our gospel, and as a gardener and a cook, I know that the mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds, even though one variety of mustard in the right conditions can grow to a reasonably tall height of two and a half metres. And what about the third illustration in our gospel, a woman who is busy making bread and using leaven to help it to rise and to soften it; what is Jesus saying to us through these stories?

Well let me share with you some thoughts...whenever Jesus speaks in ways such as this, I listen to his Word, but at the same time I choose to imagine his demeanour, today I picture him calmly smiling, and giving forth a strong sense of assurance to those carefully trying to understand and follow his Word. Scripture scholars tell us that he is not speaking in a literal, scientific manner, he is speaking in parables. Whenever Jesus taught people He more often than not used examples taken directly from everyday life, and in today's gospel reading His focus is on using these snippets of familiar everyday life to continue his teaching about the 'kingdom of God'. Jesus' parables illustrate truth in ways that people can more easily understand them...if they have ears to listen. Jesus is using teaching aids, analogies, inspired comparisons, etc. One good

description I have heard of a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Our first reading today from the Book of Wisdom reminds us that the way we live reveals God's care for all things. This care unfolds itself in surprising ways, not in its exercise of power or force or domination, but rather in freedom and choice. This points to another interesting aspect of parables, in that they often come with a 'twist' a little element of surprise that jolts you out of the sense of complacency and causes you to wonder what is really being illustrated behind the Word.

Taking these points we can say that our parable of 'weeds' is concerned with unity, fostering a community that does not exclude others, a tolerant community, accepting others as being on different stages of the journey to holiness, a community that is guided by the Spirit, a community inspired by our God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness.

Our parables of the mustard seed and leaven is concerned with conveying much needed assurance that, despite worldly appearances to the contrary, we need not fear, 'be not afraid'. Yes God invites our cooperation in God's plan for the coming of the Kingdom, but in the end it is God's plan, and will not fail, we are not in control of God's plan, God is!

It is reassuring to be reminded of this as we continue to try and practice our faith during these continuing strange *Covid19* times. All things are passing, this too will pass, do not fear, remain faith-full. I was watching Fr. Kevin Dillon last Sunday, during his recorded mass online broadcasted from St Simons, Rowville he spoke about the importance to his own life of exemplars of faith, he said he probably would not be a priest today, if it hadn't of been for the wisdom and care of one particular priest back in his seminary days. When I think of people who have influenced me in this way, and there are quite a few, one I recall today was

my mother-in-law, Madame Annie Lionnet. This woman didn't have a particularly easy life, she had thirteen children, she lost two in infancy, she raised some of them completely isolated on the Egmont Islands or *Six Iles*, a little speck in vastness of the Indian Ocean, she lived on a plantation producing Copra and coconut oil, with only a visit from a supply boat twice a year. They didn't even know that World War Two had commenced until a visit from a German Warship. She contracted typhoid and moved to Mauritius to recover. In 1952 she migrated to Australia from Mauritius, her husband Richard died from a stroke six months later. She wasn't a highly educated woman, not because of any lack of ability, but rather because of force of circumstances, she spoke no English at the time of migration, her native language was French, so she set about learning through a local state school. I am sure many of you can identify with her life of sacrifice and dedication to family, this is Godly work. And so her story goes on...She died when she was eighty four, I recall when she was in her early eighties, speaking with her in her home in Malvern, she was beginning to feel unwell from heart problems, but you know, again I saw that particular aspect of her being, which enabled her to not only cope, but thrive throughout her live journey, and that of course was her immensely strong and resolute faith in God and God's plan for her life, she knew where she was heading and she knew how to get there, and she was not afraid. She emanated that divinely influenced aura that I choose to imagine was evident as part of Jesus's demeanour on relating his parables stories we read today, I call this an aura of Blessed Assurance.

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine
O what a foretaste of glory divine
Heir of salvation, purchase of God
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood*

*Perfect submission, all is at rest
I in my Saviour am happy and blessed
Watching and waiting, looking above
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love*

*This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long
This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long*

Let us pray with thankfulness for the exemplars of faith in our own lives, let us pray in gratitude for the Word of God and ask the Holy Spirit to give us the ears to truly listen and the eyes to see God at work in our own lives, and that of others, along the way to God's kingdom.

Today let us especially join with one another in our enforced isolation, albeit in our knowledge of togetherness as the **Body of Christ Jesus**, and pray for a strengthening in our own lives of that wonderful **Blessed Assurance**....Amen.