



Church of the Holy Family
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THE VIRTUOUS WILL SHINE LIKE THE SUN

The Readings for the 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A

The **first reading** is taken from the Book of Wisdom 12:13, 16-19 where the author reminds us that the kind of judgment we receive depends not on the scales of godless justice, but instead on the mercy and love of God for those who strive to live life in response to His love. — *A Celebrants Guide to the New Sacramentary - A Cycle* by Kevin W. Irwin

The **second reading** is from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans 8:26-27. The theme is the activity of the Spirit in helping us in our weakness to pray as we ought, for it is the Spirit who makes intercession for us and intercedes for us before God. — *A Celebrants Guide to the New Sacramentary - A Cycle* by Kevin W. Irwin

The **Gospel** is from St. Matthew 13:24-43. Today's parable is Christ's answer to the question so frequently asked: "Why does God permit evil to triumph so often in this world, why are the wicked allowed to prosper?" The triumph of the wicked is short-lived, the reward of the Christian who suffers from their wickedness is everlasting. The very wickedness and injustices of evil doers are one of the ways that God uses to perfect his elect. It is only on a battlefield that a true soldier can be proved.

REFLECTION

Dear Parishioners of Holy Family,

I found this reflection on the web. I found it very interesting and so am sharing it with you because I think it really speaks to us as we keep on striving to witness to Jesus in and through the life of our Neighbourhood Christian Communities. I firmly believe that it is in, through and from our NCCs that we will help build up the Kingdom of God.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like..."

How often we have heard this introduction; how often we have heard the words of Jesus, teaching us in parables - bringing home, through common yet vivid images, the unfolding Truth about the mystery of God and our relationship with Him. Jesus uses many images in his parables: images of the ordinary, of size, of mystery... of contrast. And He tells us clearly that we should expect growth and change - that we are to be open to welcome all, without condition or exception. He never said that it would be an easy task. In fact, He showed us by example just how difficult and "uncomfortable" it could sometimes be.

He walked with His Father, not only in the Temple, but also in the carpenter shop, at the family table, in the desert and on the mountain top. He recognized the image of the Father in the members of His family, in the townspeople of Nazareth, in the poor, the lepers, the crippled, the deaf and the blind who flocked to Him. He fleshed the compassion of God in His reaching out to the tax collector, the prostitute, the Samaritan woman at the well, the thief on the cross. He was just as comfortable with the sinner and outcast, as He was with the priest, Levite or aristocrat. Every facet of Christ's human journey speaks to us of the nearness of God, in places where we least expect.

The Kingdom of God is a living thing - constantly growing, expanding - welcoming all kinds of people. Most of us have experienced the truths of the Kingdom in the parish in which we have grown up - many of us before Vatican II and its hope of renewal - so we have experienced change and growth - not in doctrine, but in form and ritual. We have also experienced the struggle and pain of growth. We sometimes find change uncomfortable, disillusioning and fearsome. We can sometimes be overcome by the evil that surrounds us in this world. And it is always tempting to avoid this struggle by retreating into our own safe, secure and like-minded communities.

But it is important for us to understand that the Kingdom of God is not about separating ourselves from everything the world throws in front of us. It's about dealing with evil, and living our lives alongside it, in the middle of it and in spite of it. Jesus tells us in the parable of the sower that evil is ultimately destructive, and that the final stage of the kingdom is when all that is evil is rooted out and destroyed. But that is his work. It's not so important for us to worry about how that will happen or unfold. What is important is that we always choose to live in the way God has called us to live - to be in this kingdom and to try to be fruitful.

The Kingdom of Heaven is near, and it is at hand. The Lord tells us to rejoice because of this - to rejoice because The Father loves us so much - from the beginning of time and forever. The tiny mustard seed has been sown and will grow to the largest of plants - the yeast will yield a hundred-fold.

But for growth to occur, there must be continuity and integrity. Therefore, we must be the link - those who welcome - those who tell the unchanging story of Jesus and the Gospel - those who model the unconditional love of Jesus to our children, and to all. The seeds of faith that we sow - the touch of Christ that only we can bring - will ensure the fulfilment of the Kingdom - as He promised. We must be the yeast: the leaven of God's Word to the world: the healers, the reconcilers, the peacemakers. Theresa of Avila is credited with the following prayer:

*Christ has no body now on Earth but yours
Yours are the hands with which Christ can bless the world.
Yours are the eyes with which Christ can shine compassion on a troubled world.
Yours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good.
Christ has no body now but yours
No hands, no feet, no eyes on earth but yours.*

The lesson that Jesus teaches is simple but inescapable: **the presence and the love of our God is something very near; we feel it and are touched and moved by it in the ordinary events, people and places of every day.** These events, the people and the places may not often be the kind where we would rather meet our God. He is often uncomfortably near us in situations and persons where we would prefer not to see Him, or in voices that we would prefer not to hear. But that is precisely the challenge of the authentic love of God. We are challenged to be Christ for others and to reflect the nearness of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like nothing we would expect. It is as close to us as our dearest friend, or our worst enemy; it touches us in our greatest joys and in our deepest sorrow. And it is never farther away than our next breath, or sigh, or tear, or burst of laughter.

Fr Eugene Vaz