

Homily071920

WHY NOT PULL UP THE WEEDS? JESUS' COUNTER-INTUITION

In Spanish the word for friend is *amigo*. The word for enemy is *enemigo*. The enemy is a parasite. A parasite can only live by attaching itself to another host organism and then literally sucks the life right out of its host. It has no world of his own. It can only sow its destruction in another's world, another's field. And the enemy seems so successful at times that we begin to doubt that the war is over and it has been won. We begin to think that it rages still because of all the evil that we see and experience. But Christ has defeated the evil one. He can only threaten with death and Christ truly has conquered death. That is what resurrection is all about. These left over skirmishes will not prevail.

"But Lord don't you want us to rid the world of these weeds, these children of the evil one?" "No." "No?" "You must be kidding Lord." "I am not kidding. I know all about the weeds. I will take care of them at the end. But what you fail to see is that I desire a bountiful harvest and you are part of it. Yes, the weeds hinder that harvest but if you were to spend your time working to remove all the weeds, all the children of the evil one, you would not give yourself to my task of becoming part of the great and plentiful harvest. I know about the weeds and I will take care of the weeds. It is not your task, not your job. Become good wheat and help others to become good wheat." That is our task. Our responsibility.

Saint Paul, in his second letter to the Christians at Corinth speaks about a moment of his own relationship with the Lord. It is the 12th chapter. Just listen:

"So that I should not get above myself, I was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to harass me and prevent me from getting above myself. I have three times pleaded with the Lord, that it might leave me; but he has answered me, 'My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' It is, then, about my weaknesses that I am happiest of all to boast, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. And that is why I am glad of weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions and distress for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong."

Weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions and distress as well as disappointments, unfulfilled dreams, unfair obstacles. What are these things? They are the weeds of life. And we all have weeds. Some sown by an enemy; some sown by ourselves in those moments when we are our own worst enemies. And because we all have weeds, Jesus is at pains to try to teach us how we are to deal with them.

It is a pretty important lesson because the reality is so common. Today we encounter a variety of responses in our society. There are angry and raised voices, public demonstrations, finger-pointing, attempts to silence or shut down, efforts to remove those we find offensive or bothersome or troublesome. A lot of this is the “If we get rid of them, the world will be a much better place” school of thought. That is what St. Paul was talking about in his own life. It is not Our Lord’s way. Let me say that again. It is not Our Lord’s way. Sometimes we beat ourselves up because we are not all we believe we should be. We beat ourselves up because we aren’t better, aren’t further along at this point in our lives than we are. We wish all of the weeds could just be pulled up and cast off and then we would be our best selves.

That is not what Jesus suggests. His suggestion is to recognize the weeds, know they are there, keep your eye on them BUT expend your energy NOT in trying to remove these things. We are to use our energy to strive to become the best wheat, the best harvest we can be. Feed that which is good in yourself—and others. Don’t concentrate on what is not. Concentrate on what can be and is to be. Keep looking forward. Keep focused on the good and do not allow yourself to be derailed by the bad. It is hard to do but he promises assistance—the Spirit, the sacraments, the support and encouragement of the believing community.

My friends, the way of Jesus is new and different. It offers an approach which is life-changing and life-transforming. It is something I really try to do. I find it has worked for me-pretty much. Not perfectly. Not always. But pretty often. And it has brought happiness and some peace—which we all could use. Why not give it a try and let go of the unproductive ways you may have been responding to things in life.