

This week, Jesus continues to speak to his disciples in parables. There are many lessons in these readings but I would like to concentrate on the themes of humility, gentleness and generosity.

Two weeks ago, our Gospel reading was from Matthew Chapter 11 and we learned about the importance of humility. Matthew states:

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart.”

In his homily, Fr Mark also made the point that meekness or gentleness is one of the key secrets to experiencing the peace of Jesus. And so we are called to humility, meekness, gentleness.

In our first reading today from the book of Wisdom, we read about God:

**“Although You are sovereign in strength, You judge with mildness,
and with great forbearance you govern us”**

We also hear of God's great power, a power to do whatever He wills, but He is patient and kind with us. He gently leads us and calls to us to turn back to Him, the One who loves us the most.

In our second reading from St Paul to the Romans we hear how the Spirit of God helps us in our weakness. He tells us:

**“for we do not know how to pray as we ought,
but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.”**

We are assured that the Spirit who intercedes for us will pray for us even when we do not know how. God is leading us gently, through His Spirit to where we need to be. He will lead us, it is up to us to follow.

Our Gospel from Matthew picks up from last week's reading and continues on with Chapter 13, which is concerned with a total of seven parables, the last three we will see next week.

All of these parables are explanations of the Kingdom of God.

Today's parables start with the sower and the seeds. The sower, who is Jesus, sows good seed but the enemy comes along and sows weeds alongside the wheat. Instead of pulling out the weeds when they are discovered, the sower is patient and instructs his servants to let it all grow together and the two will be separated at the harvest.

The weeds represent the evil-doers of the world trying to choke off the children of God (the wheat). But could it be that again, God is patient in His treatment of the bad seed, in effect, giving the evil ones a chance to repent, to turn around and come back to the Lord before the harvest?

As we hear in Matthew Chapter 5:

“...for [our Heavenly Father] makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.”

And of course He does the same for us. He waits for us, He calls us unceasingly, He gives us opportunities to seek Him, to turn back to Him. He is generous with His grace and mercy, not in an overbearing way but rather in the “small” way of gentleness and peace.

As Fr Patrick mentioned in His homily last week, the sower is generous with the seeds. He sows them everywhere, on the path, on the rocky ground, among the thorns as well as on the good soil. God will not be outdone in His generosity!

Something has been on my heart this week and I think I should talk about it.

As many of you know, I have been involved with a local charity, HTFH and have travelled back and forth to Haiti for 20 years now.

This past week I was reading about the ongoing struggles in Haiti due to the weather, the corona virus and the chronic problem of food security as well as clean water issues.

It is always the poor and those on the margins who suffer the most when these challenges arise.

I was reading an article on the website of Hopital Sacre Coeur, Sacred Heart Catholic Hospital in Milot, Haiti which is in the northern part of the country and not far from the village that HTFH partners with. It was comparing our summer to the summer in Haiti.

The article begins: What a summer it's been so far. All over the world, we have had many restrictions put on us because of Covid 19. We have had to isolate; we have had to wear masks when we go out; we have had the anxiety of wondering if we will be next to catch this virus.

And now our usual summer activities have been restricted as well. Vacations have been cancelled; our beloved sports venues are closed. Few summer activities seem carefree or even possible anymore.

But summer in Haiti, and I might add, many other third world countries, is quite different than ours. The summer heat is oppressive, especially since the vast majority cannot afford air conditioning.

Patients at the hospital suffer the most because their medical conditions are worsened by the heat. Infants are particularly vulnerable, especially to dehydration, which comes from lack of clean water to drink.

Good food and clean water are often hard to find. The devaluation of the Haitian currency continues, Inflation is running at 20% and so the ability for those who have jobs to buy food and drinkable water is severely challenged. Summer in Haiti is never a season of relaxation and fun.

There are so many needs aren't there? Our four parishes of GS, StA, StGerome and StS and StJ have just finished a drive for Street help and generously collected \$16,115 for the homeless!

Windsor/Essex had the miracle on June 27th food drive and collected over 2 million pounds of food for the hungry in our area. So much generosity from our parish and so much generosity in our community!

I'd like to tell you another story of generosity. You may have heard this story before but it's one that I cannot forget and it fits with our theme of humility, gentleness and generosity.

This story happened on one of our many trips to Haiti, in the village of Deppe, as I mentioned not far from Sacred Heart Catholic Hospital.

A friend of mine went into the nearest city of Ouanaminthe on some errand. He happened by a bakery and decided to buy a loaf of fresh bread for our dinner. On his way home he ran into an elderly woman. She was probably 80 lbs soaking wet, and he knew she was hungry. She probably hadn't eaten much in days. He looked at her and immediately gave her the loaf of bread.

What she did next, astonished him. She took the bread broke it in two and gave half to another woman standing nearby, without a second thought. She probably just gave away half the food she had for the whole day, and probably the next several days as well.

He came back and told the rest of us what had happened. We, in turn, have told countless others that same story. How many people have been inspired by this woman's generosity? By her humble and gentle

love of neighbour? How many will be inspired to take action after hearing this story? I don't know, but many, I hope.

The point is the Kingdom of Heaven is built, one humble and generous act of charity at a time; and just like that woman in the village of Deppe, our humble actions done in love for others, will also be multiplied by the grace of God. Every time we exercise generosity in a humble and gentle way, the mustard seed grows into this tree, offering shade and a home for the birds of the air.

Jesus uses that image of a lowly garden shrub that grows right in one's own backyard for a reason. God's Kingdom is not like a dominating empire, but its power erupts out of weakness, gentleness and generosity.

At this time, some of us have lost our jobs because of this pandemic; maybe our finances are in shambles; maybe someone close to us is suffering with Covid-19. Maybe we are busy and overwhelmed in taking care of our loved ones.

In spite of those tall weeds in our lives, the Lord is calling us to put ourselves in His hands, to trust in His mercy and love, and to unite our suffering to His cross and to the cross of those around us. He will take care of the weeds for us.

This pandemic has certainly brought us together in many ways we couldn't have imagined a short time ago. Many needs have come to light that need our attention and we have reached out in solidarity to those who are in need in many small, but important ways.

As I think of my friends in Haiti, as well as those around the world who suffer with limited resources, I pray that we will continue to express this solidarity in humble, gentle, service to them.

As St Mother Teresa used to said so well, from many years of experience: "We can do no great things, only small things with great love." And that is all it takes, many small things with great love and generosity.

And may the leavened bread of our sacrifices expand the Kingdom of God exponentially!