



July 22, 2017

The Weeds, the Wheat, and the Bumble Bee

Homily for the 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Church of the Holy Angels

1. Scientists say if you take a bumblebee and place it in the bottom of a glass tumbler, it will never find its way out
 - even though the top of the glass is perfectly open, it keeps searching and exploring until it eventually dies in the glass
 - once it's in the tumbler, it keeps exploring all the walls at the bottom –
 - instinct has programmed the bumblebee to search only horizontally – it can see from great distances, but it can't look up or down – it's vision is limited and, potentially, self-destructive
 - the glass provides a perfectly open and direct way of escape, but the bee never sees it, because nature has directed it to constantly look around, but not to look up
 - its limited view, and restricted observation lets it see only the negative restriction and never the possibilities for escape

 - Thankfully, we're not like bumblebees
 - we can search in all directions, explore all possible avenues, our vision is wide
 - it's only when we choose to limit ourselves to seeing from one perspective, we end up like the bee, striving towards the negative and the impossible until we exhaust ourselves
 - when people ask me, "Fr. is it alright to pray for what I want," my response is always, "of course it is." But I say, "just remember that the response may not come in your lifetime but if heaven is the fulfillment of every hope, desire and prayer – then, ultimately, we will always be granted what we ask for."
 - this hope gets me through disappointing responses, and hard diagnoses

2. Seeing the good, the hope, the joy is a message found in today's Gospel
 - it describes a world that has a mixture of bad and good
 - our world is not the way God made it
 - God made a good and perfect world, but evil entered creation
 - and so we find ourselves in a mix of evil and good, selfishness and generosity, violence and love
 - as the Gospel tells us – it's like a mixture of weeds and wheat
 - God tells us that on the last day, the weeds will be destroyed, burnt up
 - but meantime, the weeds and wheat grow together and we must navigate in that world
 - the disciple of Jesus must learn to live, serve and love in this world as we know it to be

3. This can be a great challenge
 - we can't just ignore the weeds in our world
 - we recognize injustice, poverty, discrimination, violence and greed
 - we know that these are against God's will and we are called to speak out against them

- but even when we do that, we can't forget the wheat
- we have to remind ourselves of all that is around us – the joy, the generosity, the courage and the love that we find every day, in so many places and in so many people
- a steady dose of news 24/7, tweets and posts, texts and notifications, alerts us to dangers, to negative reports but how often have you received a tweet of something wonderful, positive, joyful or inspiring?
- it's so easy and tempting just to look horizontally, rather than looking for the good all around us

4. On Friday I celebrated the funeral of Barry Winovich

- Barry had been suffering with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) for over 10 years
- his body became non-functioning, confined to a wheelchair and he had difficulties communicating
- But Barry didn't so much ask the question, "Why?" Instead, he asked the question, "What now?"
- "Why?" is a question we can't answer. "What Now?" is a response we choose in light of what we know.
- and in the span of 10 years, Barry raised over \$2 million for ALS Research at the Cleveland Clinic through his "Bright Side of the Road" organization
- were there many "weeds" to navigate through? Absolutely!
- but through it all, Barry, sought to help people see the bright side of things; always looking up and around; always seeking to bring out the good in others

5. As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to see God's goodness all around us, the vision, service, generosity, courage and love that we find in so many places and through so many people.

- all of these reflect the presence of God and we are called to proclaim this presence

6. The author of Wisdom speaks so beautifully how God is at work

- "you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind, and you give your children good ground for hope."

7. My challenge for you this week is to not focus on the weeds, but to focus on the wheat

- to remember that, despite the flaws in your marriage, despite the people who drive you crazy at work, or the kid in your neighborhood who you don't like
- no matter what the injustices you can think of or the imperfections of the church which you could list
- apart from the burdens we carry, and the sickness and grief we bear
- remember the wheat – make a list of the "good things" in your life
- because the weeds will always be there and we can pull them when we can
- but if all we focus on is the weeds, we become like that helpless bumble bee in the glass
- aware of our predicament, but unable to find a way out