



Homily for 11/7/2021

Very Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, JV

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Epiphany (resumed)/Third Last Sunday of Pentecost

There is no doubt that there are weeds along with the wheat in the Church's field, both awaiting the harvest on the last day. What before had reached intolerable levels of corruption, violence and war outside the Church, in the form of sinful society choking off the fruitfulness of the Church like kudzu overtaking a tree, has now reached intolerable levels even within the Church, amongst those supposedly most closely attached to Jesus Himself as his ministers. The crisis of faith that has come about as a result of the scandal of clergy sexual abuse of the young is surely of epidemic if not pandemic proportion. Just as the diseases of the body have eaten away at our vigor and left us breathless and on the brink of death, so, too, has the scandal of malfeasance of priests and bishops eaten away at our trust in God and His bride, the Church. Why does the Lord allow these things to happen? Why does God permit men to transgress in such abominable ways? The mysterious and only answer God allows is that of this Gospel passage. An enemy surely hath done this. That is accounted as truth. There is no other explanation for the rotten and disgusting weed that is the priest who sins in such a way. But God stays the hand of the zealous souls who would cut down the weeds among us for a merciful and hopeful reason, "lest perhaps, gathering up the weeds, you root up the wheat also together with it!"

The truth is that the roots of sin touch all of us. While it is not an excuse, it is a sobering thought. While I may not have done the vile things that are coming to life, the roots of vice lie within my heart too and "but by the Grace of God go I!" We like to imagine that "they" are sinners while not realizing that "I" have a part to play in this broken world, too. We have to break down the false judgment between "us" and "them" and realize that we all share in the brokenness of this world, even if another's sin is not "my" sin. "Let the one who has no sin cast the first stone," Jesus says to the crowd about to stone the woman caught in adultery. His mysterious mercy has us wondering whether or not Jesus approves of such a violation against the holiness of wedded vows. Of course not! Jesus does not condone the sin, even if he does not condemn the sinner. That is to pervert Jesus' mercy into a travesty of justice. Rather, loving the sinner, His mercy allows her to "go and sin no more". That doesn't necessarily mean her life will be the same as it was and that there will not be dire consequences to her relationships. It simply, and profoundly, means it will not be the death of her, even if it will mean excruciating change. Such is the purifying mercy of God.

This is an important subject, then, for us, as we approach this week which has been designated as Vocations Awareness Week. "National Vocation Awareness Week, celebrated November 7-13, 2021, is an annual week-long celebration of the Catholic Church in the United States dedicated to promoting vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and consecrated life through prayer and education, and to renew our prayers and support for those who are considering one of these particular vocations." We may ask, "how can we invite more young people to consider a vocation so wrought with weeds, as the priesthood or religious life?" But that is to make the blind mistake of missing the wheat for the weeds. Even at a time when the priesthood is under such attack, the Church is seeing unprecedented growth in many areas. Even as the light of faith dims in Europe and the "enlightened world", the spark of faith is roaring into a blaze in Africa, Asia and South America. Such is the mysterious plan of salvation that contains no earthly calculus nor credits any worldly measure for its success. The Lord, in His wisdom, has called certain members of the faithful to follow Him in complete dedication, even to the point of renouncing the good of marriage for the sake of the Kingdom of God. And there are still people in our day and in our society and our community saying yes to this audacious and counter-cultural inclination. The vocation to religious life and the priesthood are geared towards a closer relationship of Christ, in which we cling solely to Him and the hope we have of eternal life in the world to come. It causes those so called to leave everything behind and follow Him.

It is the duty of every baptized Christian to honestly and diligently search for the will of God for their lives. Instead of asking ourselves, "What do I want?" ask instead, "God, what do you want for me?" This is the prayer I myself prayed when I was a young man. There is no greater adventure, nor more satisfying path in life, than to embark



upon the journey of doing God's will, no matter how difficult, daunting or exotic it may seem. His grace is sufficient. Think not, "I am too young," or "I am not good enough," or even "I'm too good for that lowly task!" God does not call the qualified; He qualifies the called. And whether or not we appraise God's will rightly, it is the greatest path and our only true happiness.

As we approach the beginning of a new liturgical year in Advent, I have been discerning a new theme for the parish, as I mentioned in my address to the parish this past Wednesday. The recorded video and full text can be found on our website and will be reprinted in the bulletin for the next few weeks. In it I develop the theme of evangelization as invitation. The surest and best way to bring people to Jesus is not through a program or speech or YouTube video, but rather by one-on-one personal contact in which we extend a personal invitation to someone to "come and follow me." This same goes for a call to the priesthood. It is part of my own call and journey. Had it not been for someone to courageously call me forth to consider the priesthood, I may well never have thought about it or taken it seriously. God works through us to speak to another. I would encourage you in this next week to think and pray about someone you know who might make a good priest, religious brother, sister or nun. Then, after you have prayed, make the courageous and crucial next step to invite them to consider whether or not God might be calling them to a radical vocation of love in service to God and His people. Do it in person. Do it by phone. Do it by letter or Facebook messenger! Either way you do, make the personal invitation.

As to those sinners that are identifiable amongst us and bring us such shame, what are we to do? St. Paul has wisdom for us. "Brethren, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, you **must** put on heartfelt mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience. Bear with one another and forgive whatever grievances you may have against each other; forgive just as the Lord has forgiven you. Let the peace of Christ rule over your hearts. . . Be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you. . . sing to God psalms, hymns, and inspired songs." Do this, and you will be saved. Will this, even for your enemy, who hath sowed such cockled seeds in this world and you will find peace.

May Jesus Christ be praised!