

July 23, 2017

Deacon is back from an extended stay. He's been gone six or seven weeks. I also see some other people that are coming back from vacation. And, I see some people here who usually go to the four o'clock and I'm thinking, what happened? They're late. It's interesting because I was reading an article, written by a priest, about territorialism in the pews in the Catholic Church. How people always sit at the same place and the priest always knows who's missing at each Mass because they are not sitting in their proper place. And when they come to another Mass they probably feel weird because they're not sitting in their proper place. It's alive and well as you all know. It's so bad that I know priests that have been kneeling and praying before Mass and somebody will come up and tap them on the shoulder and say, "Father, that's my seat." Always the same place, I tell you. And you know what? I didn't get ordained until I was 38 going on 39. So as a single man in the church, you take low priority. You are the lowest of the low. If the usher needs someone to sit in your seat, you're out. You have to stand in the back of the church. So, I spent a lot of time single, standing in the back of the church. But, if you are a single female, they don't bother you. Here is another interesting thing you didn't know. As a single male, if I sat in a pew, nobody would sit in that pew with me. But, if a single woman sat there, they all file in. It's like, dang, I took a shower this morning. I don't know what the dynamic means but, there it is.

A man was suffering from a serious attack of appendicitis, and he wasn't going to the hospital. He was sitting there suffering and moaning and finally his wife said, "Would you man up and go to the hospital?" She said, "You might need an operation to stay alive." So, he went and the doctor said, "Sure enough we have to take you into the emergency room and give you an emergency surgery." And he was complaining before they put him under, "I know God gave me an appendix for a reason, but I don't know what it is." The doctor chuckled and said, "So I can send my kids to college."

In our Gospel this morning, once again we have parables about the Kingdom of God. We had one last week, we had three this week, and we'll have three next week. I am going to focus in on the first one because it's essentially the most important one, and the other two can be wrapped into it.

We see that the landowner sows wheat. Okay, that's what they did in Jesus' time and before and will after. But an enemy came and sowed weeds in the wheat. Now kids today are going to think what's marijuana doing in the wheat field. Because that's the meaning of weed now. But, there is a weed called darnel that looks like wheat as it grows. You cannot tell the difference between wheat and itself until the whole stock with the seeds appear. Then you know the difference but by then it's too late. The roots have all intertwined and if you pull one up, you pull the whole thing up. The enemy would come and do that, and it would cost the landowner ten times the labor to separate that because the plant is poisonous. If people got a hold of it, they would get sick and usually die. Not a good thing. In this particular parable, Jesus is saying, "God sows wheat but weeds pop up." He is showing that good and evil people co-exist. And we know that. We hear it all the time, people making evil decisions. And it's interesting that without evil in the world, and I'm not making a case for evil, but without evil we would not see some good things happening. We would not see some heroic actions. We would not see some saintly action. We would not have life as we know it. Here is an example: Say your 18-year-old is going off to college. They are nervous, they're anxious, it's causing them stress and a little bit of suffering. What if you just said, "Oh no, don't go, you can just stay home for the rest of your life and not do

anything." It happens. Anyway, what would happen? You would deprive that person, your child, of the opportunity to grow, to mature, to do something for the community of the human race. Out of that suffering would come good. Another more tragic example but a bigger one, out of the Nazi's doing what they did, we had heroic saintly people: Maximilian Kolbe, Edith Stein, Detrick Bonhoeffer. We had saintly people coming out of that. We had heroic actions coming out of that. People giving their lives for others which would not have happened without that evil presence. So, when evil is present, God can make good come out of it, if we let Him, if we ourselves make good decisions and not go with the evil. A lot of times people don't make a decision. Most of the German people did not make a decision with the Nazi's and so they were caught up in it and went along with the machine. Sometimes in the history of the world, a little bit of people, fed up with the evil, cause some tremendous implications for the better. Francis, which wasn't his real name, in Italy, in the eleven hundreds, got upset with the way his father was doing business and said, "I am no longer going to be associated with you." And he went out into the world on his own, this rich kid, and he put on a poor man's clothing, because he was naked. He put on that man's clothing and he heard a voice in the middle of the night, "Build my church." So he went out to this little ruined church and started physically rebuilding it. Eleven other people joined him. And then the twelve guys, they went down to see the Pope and said, "You know what? We want to start an order." Today that would be impossible. Within a few years after the Pope said. "Yes," there were hundreds. Within decades they were all over Europe. Within a century they were around the world. They are countless in number. They're called the Franciscans. And the Capuchins, who branched off from them. All because one man got fed up with the evil in his life. Was it that church God was calling him to build? No, because God was calling another young man, and he got fed up with the world and the evil he saw, and he founded the Dominicans. Saint Dominic. He went down to the Pope, to try and get approval to start his order. And guess who he ran into? They were going like this in the hallway (side by side). Saint Francis and Saint Dominic and they both walked in at the same time requesting approval. The Pope gave it to them immediately. Why? Because he had a dream the night before that these two guys were going to walk in and become the pillars of the church. They were going to raise the church up and support it and fix it. The Church in that time was failing due to the corruption of the clergy. The Church St. Francis and St. Dominic were called to fix, wasn't a physical building, but the Universal Church. The Pope gave approval and so we have the Dominicans and the Franciscans, all because two young men were upset with the way evil was going on in their lives. Good can come out of evil.

Now we hear people, some of them, atheists, and others that say, "If there is a good God, why does he permit evil?" He permits evil because He knows He can bring good out of it. He permits evil for the same reason He permits good. God gave us intelligence. God gave us free will. So, we make the decisions to be good or bad, good or evil. We make those choices. Many of us, almost all of us, make those decisions and we go back and forth. Sometimes we make an evil decision. We say, "Oh God, that decision is not evil." Is it a sin? Yes. Then it is evil, it goes against God. Sometimes we make good decisions and those decisions determine what we do in our lives. God gives us free will to make those decisions. If he didn't give us free will, we'd be robots, androids, programmed for the good. So when these atheists do this, and these people who say, "I don't believe in God," then, if they would have God do away with evil, they would have God do away with themselves. We would all be done away with just like that. If you pulled up the weeds you would destroy the wheat. We are not all perfect. We are not all good. God gives us free will to make those decisions. Hopefully we choose the good more than we choose the bad. The thing is, if God didn't give us free will, there would be something else missing too. If God programmed us to be good all the time, then there would be no love in the world. Love has to be freely given. You

can't force love. It has to be freely given. For love to be freely given, you have to have free will. That's why God has love up there in the Trinity. Free will. That is one of the things of which we are made in the image and likeness of Him. Free will. Let's get rid of all evil in the world. First off, you get rid of all the people. But second of all, you would do away with love. There would be no more love. And what would the Beatles song be without...love. (Anyone need me to sing that for you?) Without love, there is no reason for Jesus to be here. There is no reason for Jesus to come. You do away with evil, you do away with good, you do away with love, and you do away with Jesus. The next time someone tells you that there is no God, say those things back to them.

Our parable teaches us essentially, God is more patient with evil than we are. God wants those people to convert back to the good, to repent, back to His side. That's why God permits evil. He's patient with it. Because He's trying to get it to come over to the good, to come over to his side. That's why the church says we don't want capital punishment in the prisons. Not because the Church is against the death penalty, no, it's not. There are reasons for it. But, because we want those guys and those gals to have time to repent, to come to know Jesus, to be saved. That's why we are against capital punishment and any kind of early death. We want those people to have a chance to come to know God, to make the decision for the good. The parable lets us make those decisions by our free will. Let us go forth today, and make good decisions and try to change the ones that we don't like about ourselves.

God Bless You!