

6th Sunday after Epiphany 2- EF 2013
Matthew 13: 31-35
Dcn. Pat Hall

You may have seen the hand-outs of the Proper Prayers of the Mass that we have available in the lobby.

Today's handout ends with a commentary by Dom Prosper Gueranger (1805-1875).

He begins his commentary on today's reading from First Thessalonians. He says,

The praise which the apostle here gives to the Thessalonians for their fervor in the faith they had embraced, conveys a reproach to the Christians of our own times.

He laments that despite the treasure of faith that has been passed on that, *"our faith is not so strong or our lives so holy, as were those of the early Christians... We love this present life, as though we had not the firm conviction that it is to pass away."*

What is of special note is that Dom Prosper Gueranger said this in the middle 1800's and yet it is a lament we also can claim in the 21st Century. We share the challenges of a lukewarm faith.

Jesus encountered the same as an itinerant preacher. His miraculous healings had attracted many curiosity seekers. But what he found was a people trapped in their own rut, going along, just bouncing from curb to curb.

He provided a shake-up.

He got them to say, "What?" and offered them, "aha's".

He did so with parables.

These parables were rooted in common life experiences, but in the end, they turned common sense inside out.

The last shall be first and the first shall be last.

What father would give his son a snake?

Love your enemy.

Who is that man's neighbor?

He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

People had their assumptions shaken and were brought to the brink of God's truth.

Those who chose to take that next step in faith, Jesus accepted as disciples. He then taught them the inner meaning of his parables. He first shook them up and then he provided spiritual leadership.

Do I allow Jesus to shake up my assumptions?

Do I assume that I am doing fine as long as I perform the 1-2-3 step of my Christian upbringing?

Have I grown lukewarm?

Could anyone say that the life I am leading is really one of discipleship?

Who would say that I was a good neighbor to them, that I loved them and that my love of God was evident to all?

Am I open to Jesus' spiritual leadership, the leadership provided by his Church?

And in this grand cosmos, how could anyone as insignificant as me be of any noticeable worth?

It is in Jesus' parables heard today that we learn the significance of apparent insignificance.

The mustard seed of Palestine is as small as a fleck of pepper.ⁱ

In Christ and through Christ, we may start as the mustard seed, grow in the grace of Christ, and become as substantial as a tree, providing shelter to those in need of rest.

By adding the fermenting agent of leaven, the three measures of flour mentioned in the Gospel would be enough to feed a hundred persons.ⁱⁱ

In Christ and through Christ, we may act as leaven.

Inspired by his feeding of the five thousand, may we bring all we have to Jesus so that he can feed the multitudes about us.

How can we have such confidence when we are so small?

We have the example. We have the incarnation.

He was born small and completely vulnerable in a manger.

He was arrested for healing and preaching.

He was stripped, brutalized and crucified.

The world thought him powerless, beaten and dead.
And yet with his resurrection, all of creation was born anew.

It is to that mystery that we are called to join our lives...
to *whom* we are called to join our lives.
We join with him at his altar.
And then we are sent forth to share Jesus' salvation with the world.

Each of us has our own individual call.
You know the people God has given you to serve.
They may be family or friends.
They may be co-workers or fellow students.

But we are also a parish family.
We are called to be like the Thessalonians.
We are called to be a people of faith who work and labor with charity.
We are called to spread the Word of the Lord to all places even in times of
tribulation.

Part of that call is to be a light to those who share our neighborhood on the
Eastside.
They hunger for God's love.
May we be that love for them.

We do so with the confidence that in Christ,
significance can come from apparent insignificance,
that the greater is contained in the lesser and
that by stepping forth in discipleship,
we can share the Kingdom of God until its fulfillment ...
now and forever.

ⁱ Ann M. Garrido, *Mustard Seed Preaching*, p. xii

ⁱⁱ Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., *The Gospel of Matthew, Sacra Pagina*, p. 205