

**July 23, 2023**  
**Cycle A – 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

Romans 8: 26-27

Matthew 13:24-43

**Notes from Bishop Peter**

**THEME: IN THESE TIMES WE ALL NEED A GOOD DOSE OF HUMILITY**

1. Let's start with the reading from Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 8:26-27:  
"The (Holy) Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.<sup>27</sup> And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God."
  - a. This means that the Holy Spirit, being God, knows the depths of God and also knows ourselves better than we ever could. Thus, the Spirit is constantly praying in us, praising God and lifting us up to God in ways we perhaps will never know. When we enter into prayer, we "plug into" what is already going on in our hearts and souls. Moreover, the Spirit knows our needs and the needs of our families and friends and society and intercedes for us with the appropriate prayers.
  
2. One of our greatest needs today, as individuals and as members of our society is humility. Some background from today's Gospel, Matthew 13: 24-43. It features the parable of the wheat and the weeds. The Son of Man (Jesus) sows good seed in his field and at night, an enemy comes and sows weeds. When the laborers discover this, they go to the Master and suggest that they uproot the weeds. The Master, however, prefers to wait until the harvest before saving the wheat and burning the weeds.
  - a. In Jesus' own explanation of the parable, one notes that the Master is the patient one and instructs the workers to be patient too. There are good lessons to learn from this.
    - God has lots of time. God created this universe about 13.8 billion years ago and our earth about 4.3 billion years ago. Thus, God waits patiently for sinners to repent and change our ways.

- One of the strongest arguments against capital punishment is that by taking life, which only God can do, the state may deprive the criminal of the time he or she needs to repent and ask forgiveness of God and of their victims' families. God's time is not always ours.
3. When asked to describe himself, Pope Francis said, "I am a sinner." It would be good for all of us to say this sincerely especially during this time of finger-pointing by those who criticize others without seeing the evil and sin in their own lives. We hear Jesus say, "How can you criticize the speck in your brother or sister's eye and neglect the log in your own? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."
  4. What about destroying statues and monuments? Do those activists know the facts of the individual's past? Do they expect figures of the past to be flawless? Another question: How would they themselves have acted at that time in history and under the same circumstances? For example, ignorance of the past was displayed by those who wanted to destroy the statues of Saint Junípero Serra, founder of at least 9 missions in California, claiming he mistreated indigenous peoples. Actually, according to a statement by Archbishop José Gómez of Los Angeles, those crimes began about ten years after his death. Also, despite a painful affliction in his leg, Serra travelled over 2,000 miles to denounce the actions of those who were trying to enslave native peoples.
  5. In this regard, words from Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York are appropriate: "As a historian by training, (Ph.D. in history), I want to remember the good and the bad and recall with gratitude how even people who have an undeniable dark side can let light prevail and leave the world better. I want to keep bringing classes of schoolchildren to view such monuments and to explain to them how even such giants in our history had crimes, unjust acts and plain poor judgment mixed in with the good we honor."
  6. A last point: People go church-hopping, expecting to find the perfect (?) community where members love each other and all think more or less as they do. Please remember this parable. There is no perfect community and those that seem to be so attractive can soon disintegrate because of the presence of the evil one. Remember Brigadoon.

7. Now we come to the Eucharist. It is Jesus whose love for us includes patience while demanding that we be patient with one another. And it is Jesus who sends us his Holy Spirit so we can accomplish this.

***Amen.***