

HOMILY for 16th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's Gospel talks God's judgment on the good & the bad through a farming experience; & that reminds me of this cute story I'd like to share with you.

A pastor grew watermelons to supplement his meager income. By the way, that could be me Fr. Peter Vu! ...Anyhow, he was doing all right, but it bothered him that local kids would sneak into his patch at night & eat his melons.

After some thoughts, he came up with an idea he felt sure would scare the kids away. The pastor made a sign reading, "Warning! One of these watermelons has been injected with Rat Poison!" & posted it in the field. Pleased with himself, he went to bed.

The next day, the pastor surveyed his field & found that no watermelons were missing. But, there was a sign next to his reading, "Now, there are two!"

Those darned kids, heh? Anyway, we all dream about being with Jesus in Heaven after this life. But, I often wonder if we can tell the difference between Heaven & this world. If we can't distinguish between those 2 places, we would not want to be in Heaven at all costs. We might think this current world is the best; & there's nothing wrong with it. While you're trying to sort out the differences between Heaven & this world, let me point out the biggest contrast between those 2 worlds for us.

The biggest difference between Heaven & this world is that our world is full of evil & darkness compared to Heaven. If you have not realized that, just take a step back & see all the violent & evil acts happening around the world every day. First, we've seen the increasing number of shootings in various neighborhoods around our country. Additionally, we have lots of violent acts pop up all over the world. Clearly, some people do not hesitate to hurt & take a life of others. But, a human life is not the only thing an evil person would take. This person would have no problem with cheating, lying, & deceiving others to get what he/she wants. Yet, that's just the tip of a huge mountain of evil things that humans have done to one another. There is no Commandment of God that humans have not violated. However, the worst part is that many wicked people continue to thrive for years without being held accountable for it. They don't get the right punishments for their evil acts right here on earth. In fact, most of them seem to laugh at all the justice systems including the divine one. To put it another way, while good people have bad things happen to them constantly, bad people seem to get away with all their evil acts & live a good life. That seems to be one of the main complaints that I often hear from the people of God. So, is there divine justice? Is there any justice at all? Would anyone be held accountable for his/her actions?

It seems like we can find the answers for those questions in today's Gospel. Here is how it responds, "...The owner's servants said to him, 'Do you want us to go out & pull up all the weeds?' 'No,' he replied, 'pull up the weeds & you might take the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will order the harvesters, first collect the weeds & bundle them up to burn, then gather the wheat into my barn.'" Apparently what Jesus wants to tell us is that the divine justice will hold everyone accountable for his/her actions. The time for that will be on the Harvest Day or, the Last Day. When that time comes, God will reward the good people a place in God's house. Then, God will punish the bad people & put them in the eternal fire.

That's how God's wheel of justice works. God's verdict on the whole world would be carried out on the Last Day. It might take time for that wheel to turn & reveal God's judgment on the world. Jesus uses 2 analogies in today's Gospel to remind us on how the divine justice works & why we need to be patient. The first analogy has to do with the mustard seed & the long process for that seed to grow & reveal its true potential. Something insignificant like a mustard seed could become a big plant & a secured shelter for all creatures under the Heaven & their future generations to stay. Similarly, God's wheel of justice might be insignificant for the rest of the world. But, over time God's people will realize why the divine justice is important in their lives. In this life, it helps them to stay on the right path & be good people. Moreover, it prepares them to see God face to face & be rewarded with a place in Heaven. So, only with time shall they see God's wheel of justice comes full circle. The second analogy of the yeast being mixed with the 3 measures of flour again reminds us to allow the divine justice to take shape & rise to its full potential like the rising mass of dough. So, let's be patient & continue to put our trust in God's wheel of justice as we keep seeing the increasing level of evil & darkness around the world.

In case we have any doubt about the divine justice, today's First Reading wants to share with us this message, "There is no god besides you who have the care of all, that you need show you have not unjustly condemned. For your might is the source of justice; your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all... Through you are mastery of might, you judge with clemency, & with much lenience you govern us... And you gave your sons & daughters good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins." So, our God is just; & He will hold evil power accountable for its actions. But at the end of the day, our God will also be merciful & allow people in darkness to repent & come home to Him.

My dear brothers & sisters, Heaven might not mean much for some people in our world. God's wheel of justice might not matter to evildoers & people in darkness. But, today's readings want to assure us that God will hold everyone accountable for his/her actions after this life. For now we just need to be patient with God's plan & put up with all the evil acts in this world. When the Last Day comes around, we'll fully see how that wheel of justice comes down on good people & bad ones.