

## 16<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME YEAR A HOMILY 2020

### WEEDS & WHEAT, MUSTARD & YEAST, WOMEN & MEN

*Mt 13.24-434      Wis 12.13-19      Rom 8.24-27*

*Welcome once more to our ongoing virtual celebration of Eucharist, as we continue to be patient and hope for an eventual vaccine or elimination of this insidious virus.*

Another week goes by in lockdown, with many more cases of coronavirus identified in our Melbourne community, angst and uncertainty continuing, with no end in sight yet. Waleed Aly, writer and academic, wrote this week an article titled *Virus shows us who's in charge*, wherein he reflects on what he calls our 'radical interdependency', locally and globally, reinforced by a virus which knows no boundaries, as it continues to spread randomly. All the more is the necessity for continuing to observe prescribed precautions and live with the limitations.

Also, the economic effects are widespread, with lower socioeconomic people hit hardest first, as seen in the Housing Commission towers not so far away from here, but also middle class workers and small business owners, particularly with this second protracted lockdown. He considers the realization that we have lost our sense of independence and control, "because we'd built a world on the axiom of independence, of us as masters of our respective worlds rather than mere participants in them. As individuals we were masters of our economic destiny (evidenced in our disdain for the unemployed), and as a species masters of our natural environment (evidenced in our heedlessness on environmental degradation)." And now our tendency to complacency with extended restrictions, is, as he says "an inevitable expression of belief in our (own) mastery", and with physical (social) distancing has helped lead to multiplying the number of victims to the virus. He concludes: "We're face to face with our own fragility and we don't like what we see, if we even recognize it at all."

Pope Francis takes much the same line, from "*Laudato Si*", his reminder of our environmental responsibilities to respect and protect our precious planet, and the fact that "everything is interrelated", and to concentrate on the good we can do, not the restrictions we feel. He states: "If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. If we do not, we burden our consciences with the weight of having denied the existence of others."

As Michael McGirr, faith educator and author, reflects: "If nothing else, Covid-19 has shown us how closely connected we all are. China is literally a few breaths away, as are Italy and Spain and Britain. Let's not be afraid of that." He writes of the latest knighthood (not that I am much into titles or honours), granted this Friday, to now Sir Thomas Moore (no, not the sainted chap of faith and conscience, St Thomas More, who lost his head to Henry VIII!), but formerly plain old Tom. Having just turned 100, Tom was knighted by nonagenarian Queen Elizabeth (QE II), after walking 100 laps (for each year of his life) around his English garden, hoping to raise £100 (pounds) for the NHS (National Health Service) in April, but ending up with £33 million (\$A59m). Having warned the BBC he wouldn't kneel before the Queen, as he'd never be able to get up again, he stood before her, hands on his walker! His motto is *#TomorrowWillBeAGoodDay*, so we could all take heart and learn from his simple example, determination and remarkable achievement.

It is a call to refocus on priorities and our perspective on life in general. This is not going to go away overnight. We can curl up in a corner feeling sorry for ourselves, or, like Sir Tommy, we can do our little bit to be encouraging, engaging and hopeful, particularly given our modern means of communication with the new technology.

Limitations are all around, but last week I was able to join our long-term faithful parishioner Maureen McCormack's family, with her children, including two, who were overseas in Singapore and Colorado, on **ZOOM** for virtual prayers and a blessing, two daughters in the hospital ward with her, so she could consciously and actively participate, joining in with the prayers and responses. Sadly, Maureen died on Tuesday, and we remember her and her family in our prayers, and offer our sympathy today. Further, I was denied permission to visit a very sick parishioner in a nursing home this week, but was asked if I could Skype or phone her instead, for prayers and a blessing and a chat! These are new ways we are learning of doing things to bring comfort and peace, in difficult and challenging circumstances.

What's that Paul Kelly protest song title, telling the story of Vincent Lingiari and his pursuit of indigenous land rights? ***"From Little Things, Big Things Grow!"*** That fits well with today's Gospel theme, as Jesus offers three further parables about the inevitable growth of the Kingdom of God he proclaims. A further three down to earth images of, once more, the grains of wheat amid the intrusive weeds, the man planting the insignificant mustard seed set to flourish as a great protective bush, and the woman adding yeast as the catalyst for the bread to rise. Whatever the initial and ongoing difficulties, the Kingdom will continue to come, whatever the opposition, hostility, trials and tribulations, ups and downs of human life and history, and here we are, a Church in crisis, in some ways, but also full of vitality and hope, at the grass roots, with the whole People of God, those who profess and live their faith in active and positive ways.

The inevitability of the weeds getting in the way is a clear image of the reality of good and evil in the world, and the need to identify and counter the dark side of ourselves and the evil out there, and find light in the darkness, as the sun always rises! Perhaps another take on this is Matthew's realization that the mission of the Church, as envisaged by Jesus, was always to be looking outwards, at new opportunities for evangelizing and inclusion of those who were different, growth coming from hospitality and new membership of believers who heard the Gospel message as good news. Moreover, rather than eliminating the weeds, a reality of the obstacles, perhaps the opportunity is also being given for those who do evil, and all of us, as sinners in general, to have the opportunity for repentance, forgiveness and a second or third or more chances, if we fail and fall! And isn't that the case for us all?

Also, I like the Jerome Biblical Commentary's concluding take on the parable of the yeast, where it suggests: ***"A side effect of this parable is that it is possible to see God present and active in everyday things if one looks at them with wonder."***

Meanwhile, it is for us, you and me, to continue to grow the Kingdom of justice, love and peace Jesus proclaims.

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*19<sup>th</sup> July 2020*