

Proper 11a
 Mt 13.24-30,36-43; Rom 8.18-25
 July 20, 2008
 Fr. M. Dow Sanderson

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In preaching on the first of our “agricultural” parables, Fr. Dan confessed to us last week that he had actually sown the seeds of laziness. Did not many of us, right here in this church, hear him say that very thing from this pulpit? This is alleged to have happened at Pantry last Saturday. But several fellow workers have reported to me that Fr. Dan only shared his intention to sow the seeds of laziness... he hasn’t gotten around to it yet... Evidently, the seeds of procrastination very nearly resemble the seeds of laziness.

Well, as we continue with our second agricultural parable, I wish to confess that I too am afflicted...for I have been known to sow the seeds of “persnickety-ness”. Yes, it is a fact. I have been known to walk into the office and growl before the sun has even come up, “Whose diet coke can is this left here on this table?” Yes, it would have been nicer to say, *Good morning, Father. How was your weekend...* but the seeds of persnickety-ness grow like kudzu, and are very quick to choke and overtake everything in sight.

I won’t bore you again with the details, since you have all heard the well-worn tales passed on by idle gossipers about how I have been known to brush the fringe on the rug moments after house guests were ushered out the front door... and how I have been known to stop vestry meetings if volume “six” of the *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* has been inadvertently placed before volume “five”.

Suffice it to say that those who have the propensity for persnickety-ness are not wild about the parable that Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel.

Evidently, a weed called “bearded darnel” or *lolium temulentum* was very well known in the days of Jesus. It so resembled wheat that it was impossible to tell that it was not until it was grown. And by then it was too late. The roots were too entangled. And it could not be separated without doing great damage. The now-famous advice that we are given in the parable: *Leave it alone. It will all get sorted out in the end.*

But that is a “Type A” nightmare! Too messy! Too many loose ends! What do you mean we have to wait until both the wheat and the weeds are grown, and then let somebody else tidy up! That just won’t do!

Have you ever heard the not-so-funny riddle that some people occasionally ask... What is the definition of minor surgery? And the answer, of course, is *Surgery on somebody else!*

Well most of us would be delighted to perform the wheat and weeds surgery on our neighbors.... *Come here, buddy, it looks like you got a few weeds growing there. Why don’t you let me snatch those suckers out!* We are not terribly concerned if it leaves a few bloody places in your heart, because, after all... I won’t feel a thing!

Yes, we are brilliantly capable of seeing everybody else’s overgrown gardens. Other people’s weeds are most obvious... and we nearly always have the solution.

But there is one more little detail in this parable that almost goes unnoticed....

When the servant comes to tell the householder that there are weeds among the wheat... the householder scratches his chin carefully in reflection and mutters, *an enemy has done this.* And yes, we are told in the very first verse that it has been assumed that some wicked men came by night and wrought this mischief... but I just wonder if that’s how it really happened.

I am not for a moment taking issue with scripture's veracity...(especially since this is a parable of Our Lord!) but I am just asking out loud if any of you think there might be a little literary device here we might play with.

I am asking because it is so consistent with my own personal experience.

For instance, I know for a fact that gremlins have been known to move my keys. When I go to the very spot where I have laid them, and find them not reposing where they ought to be... my very first thought is, *An enemy has done this...*

At night, when I brush my teeth, and look up in the mirror and see the spare tire around my middle, I immediately exclaim, *An enemy has done this.*

When I am tired and fatigued... or even when I am not, and for some inexplicable reason, hurtful words come out of my mouth, my very first inclination is to shout, *an enemy has done this!*

And I know the enemy only too well.

The very good that I would do is that which I fail to do, and the sin I would avoid is the one to which I return time and again.. *Wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

We remember that verse from Romans 7, which we heard just a few weeks ago. And it continues to help us understand the truth about ourselves... that our hearts are filled with both wheat and tares...

And we are the enemy who has sown the seeds of our own sickness...

But while we were yet sinners...while we were yet the enemy... Christ died for us.

And while we are in this mortal body, we groan and struggle as the Lord of the Harvest prunes and prepares us for eternity.

And sometimes it hurts.

But we have been given the assurance that *the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the Glory which is to be revealed.*

A glory that we can this day taste and touch... in these sacramental gifts... which are both a foretaste of the heavenly banquet... and the food to equip us even now on the journey. .

AMEN

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