

HOMILY 15th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

JULY 15/16, 2023

You can count the number of seeds in any apple, but you cannot count the number of apples in any seed. That is very true, isn't it? Each of the seeds in an apple could produce nothing, or it could grow into an apple tree that produces an abundant harvest for many years. It depends upon whether the seed is sewn and the quality of the soil in which it is sewn.

Let's talk first about the seed. All seed comes from God. We cannot produce seed. The potential life that is within a seed comes from God. We can attempt to modify a seed, but we cannot create it. The life or the potential life comes from God. That is true of everything that has life. That life comes from God. The seed that Jesus is referring to in the Gospel Reading is the Word of God. We believe that Sacred Scripture is the inspired Word of God. We also believe that our faith is a gift from God. If Sacred Scripture is never sown, it will never bear fruit. If we never share our faith, it will never bear fruit. The seed comes from God, and it is up to us to sew the seed. We sew the seed by working with God to do the acts of kindness he is calling us to do.

In the Gospel Reading, the seed is just scattered all over. At first glance, it looks as though it is just a poor farmer who does not know what he is doing. But that is how we are called to sew the seed. Sew it everywhere because we never know in advance how fertile the soil is. That is the reason why we really need to invite and welcome everyone into our Church without judging them. We do not know in advance the response that individual will have to that invitation. The invitation is an act of kindness. When you join with God and do the acts of kindness that he is calling you to do, you have no idea the positive effect you are having on that person or on the world. You may never know, but every act of kindness has a positive effect.

The seed that comes from God is all good seed. Once it is sewn, whether or not it bears good fruit, depends upon the quality of the soil. I started spiritual direction almost 30 years ago, and my first

spiritual director taught me something I will never forget. He told me that there are two different types of spirituality, a spirituality of sin and a spirituality of grace. If you have a spirituality of sin, you focus on your own sin, the sin of others, and the evil in the world and how that affects your life. If you have a spirituality of grace, you look at how God is present in your life, what he is calling you to be and what he is calling you to do, and how the goodness in the world affects your life. The difficulty with a spirituality of sin is if you get too preoccupied with sin, that can be the thorn that chokes the seed. We will never find God in sin and evil because he is not there. We can only find God in the goodness. That is where he dwells. Having an awareness of our sin and the evil in the world can be helpful; but we need to repent for our sin, learn what we need to learn and move forward.

There are a couple of other thorns that can choke the seed in our lives. We all have a certain amount of anxiety in our lives; but when that anxiety becomes excessive, we can become immobilized by the anxiety and unable to do anything. If we are overly anxious over doing what God is calling us to do, we may just avoid doing it. That relieves our anxiety, but we will never sew the seed God is calling us to sew. The other thorn is saying that what we do will not make a difference. Every time we sew a seed through an act of kindness, we have a positive effect on that person, who is likely to respond with kindness. Every person who observes that act of kindness is likely to be changed by it and is more likely to respond with kindness. Every act of kindness that is sewn has an exponential effect that we will never be fully aware of.

So take that good seed from God. Sew that seed far and wide through acts of kindness. Just as you can count the number of seeds in any apple, but you cannot count the number of apples in any seed, you can count the number of seeds of kindness you sew, but you cannot count the amount of goodness in any seed. So sew the seed through acts of kindness. That is how we can change the world.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim