

**16th Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 22 & 23, 2017**

**S. Maureen D’Onofrio, CSJ
All Saints Parish, Syr., NY**

I once heard a story about a young family who while traveling stopped for dinner at a diner on Christmas Day. An inebriated elderly man was facing them a few booths away and the child in the high chair kept looking at this poor man who was dirty and smelly saying, “hi-ya, hi-ya” all through the meal. When the father got up to get the car, the mother went to the cash register to pay the bill while holding the child in her arms. The inebriated man came up behind her to pay his bill and the child jumped out of her arms into the man's arms, hid his face under the man's dirty beard and said, “I wuv you!” The man told the mother, “It's the best Christmas present I ever had!”

The inebriated man represents the human condition and the child represents the Good News of God's unconditional love!

So what are all these parables about that we just heard last week and this week proclaimed in Matthew's Gospel? In these parables Jesus is simply describing for us the great love that God has for each one of us. This is how Jesus related important truths to people - where they were at!

We know God's love encompasses all and reaches out to all of us who may feel rejected, depressed, or broken. I think Jesus is saying loud and clear through this gospel about wheat & weeds that our personal weeds, and we all have them, grow together with the wheat. Truth is, bad and good are often entangled wherever we look...world history, government, Church, and on TV, bad news, bad news, and more bad news!

Sister Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ, in her topic WHO NEEDS WEEDS, reflects on how most of us have our own ideas of what are weeds and what is wheat, but since they both grow up together, she goes on to write how we might be surprised at the final harvest that we were mistaken...maybe plants taken for weeds turned out to be wheat and some of the wheat...well, it might not turn out to be what we expected! So

**there's hope for all of us...HOPE standing for Hang On Possibilities Everywhere!
I remember my mother saying to me one day when she heard me talking ill about someone... There's so much bad in the best of us, and so much good in the worst of us, that it ill behooves any of us to talk about the rest of us.**

Whenever I look at wheat fields, I can't help but think of Jesus' parables. I spent a month in Concordia, Kansas, studying the history of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and while riding through the country side there, all one sees are wheat fields and, of course, this area is called the "Bread Basket of the World" and for each of us, Eucharist is the "Bread Basket of LIFE."

This weekend we have the privilege of being with Zachary Smith who is making his First Communion and receiving the Bread of Life that nourishes the soil of the soul for the first time. So we'll hold Zachary most especially in prayer this weekend.

In conclusion, we know it's no accident that Jesus taught through parables and I'm sure if he were walking the earth today that he just might agree and even say the words of the story teller and poet, Oriah Mountain Dreamer, in her poem, THE INVITATION. What I like about Oriah, is she calls herself a sinner writing to sinners who through her writings questions herself and us about what's meaningful in our lives...I'm only going to a pick out a few phrases of the poem:

***"It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.**

*** "It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon.**

I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and closed from further pain...without moving to hide it or fade it or fix it.

*** “I want to know if you can be with joy...if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, to be realistic, to remember the limitations of being human.**

*** “I want to know if you can see beauty, even when it's not pretty, every day, and if you can source your own life from its presence.**

*** “I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.**

And lastly,

***“It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back”...that's courage, that's love!**

In light of Jesus' parables and phrases from the poem, maybe Jesus is inviting each one of us to pay attention to the mandate that Jesus proclaimed at the end of our gospel reading:

“IF YOU HAVE EARS TO HEAR – THEN LISTEN!”

Do I have ears to hear and am I listening?

Amen!