

Homily. 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. A. 22/23 July 2023.

I love fish. For many years I used to keep an aquarium in my home. I also love eating seafood which means that the Season of Lent and fish on Friday's is no sacrifice at all for me. Sadly however, I never took to fishing. I did try it, but I found it very fiddly and messy and worst of all, often a lot of time spent for little or no catch. Sorry fishing people, but that just me. I'm afraid I'm the same way with gardening. I love gardens, visiting them in parks and private homes when I can, but I'm just not much good at gardening myself. I've tried it, I really have, but apart from 3 potted house plants that have managed to survive my tender care, the rest haven't. Somehow I even managed by over zealous watering to kill off an un-killable cactus. In short, a lot of time and energy for little result. Another sorry then, this time to all the wonderful farmers and gardeners. I'm glad that you're around to make up for my lack of skill and patience.

Jesus 3 parables about what the Kingdom of Heaven is like and how it comes to be all speak of messiness, time and patience, which as I've said aren't always my best points. Did you notice how tolerant and gentle the farmer was with his crop of wheat, and even with the weeds? Unlike what I'd have done, he didn't pull out the bad weeds, because if he had he would have also torn up the good wheat. Smart farmer; Wise God.

Much the same can be said for the person who sowed a tiny mustard seed in their field. They had to patiently wait for ages, for years even, until it grew up strong and big, becoming a tree. Only after all of that time and effort could the seed fulfil its potential, providing shade on a hot day and a

home for the birds that flew by. The gardener here was playing the long game in the same way that thankfully God does with us and our world.

As for the woman in her kitchen busily cooking up a meal for her family, we notice that she carefully puts a small scoop of yeast in with the huge pile of flour. Next, she gets to work kneading it all through and then she has sit and wait until it begins to rise. Only when it has can she put it into the oven, baking the bread her family to eat and live. Some years ago I tried baking bread at home, but again it was a lot of mucking about for not very much return. Ever since then I leave this job to the baker. But, truthfully, God is like this woman, wife and mother; well practiced, always busy and ever wise and patient with the processes of life and humanity.

Jesus says that this is the way that God works with us and the world, patiently and steadily over a long time unfolding the Kingdom of love, respect, justice and mercy, all the while gently coping with problems and adapting to many setbacks. The call in these stories is for each of us over our lifetimes to become a little more like God the farmer, God the gardener and God the mother. If you're like me though, somewhat impatient, too often rushing around and wanting things to happen quickly, the least we can do is to notice God's ways of working, appreciate what God is always doing for us and learn from it. By noticing this maybe we can help each other to be better people. We might even end helping make this world a happier, fairer and kinder place in which to live and grow together in God's peace. And that's what the Kingdom is all about.