



Annual Archdiocesan Agencies Mass

Homily

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Archbishop of Perth**

**Thursday 2 July, 2020
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer together, we pray that God's Kingdom might come and that God's will might be done. That the Kingdom of God should be so central in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples should not surprise us. As this morning's Gospel reminds us the Kingdom of God was a central feature in the preaching of Jesus. This morning, then, I would like to invite us all to reflect a little on the Kingdom of God, just what that kingdom is all about, and in particular what it means for us as people who are engaged so closely in the life and mission of the Church.

The first of the three parables we read about this morning has a special significance for us as we seek to be at the service of God's Kingdom. In the long history of the Church, there has often arisen the temptation to try and create what we might call a Church of the perfect. This temptation is easy to understand. After all Jesus does set a high standard for us to reach. He calls us, for example, to love one another with the same intensity of love with which he loves us. This is a love which is totally focused on the other rather than on ourselves. It is a love which is prepared to give everything, even to the point of death. It is a love which holds nothing back.

From a very different vantage point, Jesus calls us to be ready to forgive no matter how badly or how often someone hurts us. He calls us to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us, to walk two miles with someone when they have asked us only to walk one mile, to give someone our cloak when they have asked us only to give them our tunic. It is like asking us to give someone the shirt off our back! And the list goes on and on. Jesus, we might say, asks us to do the impossible or, as he himself expresses it, to be perfect just as our Heavenly Father is perfect.

In view of this we might understand why the disciples were tempted to wonder if Jesus wanted them to root out the weeds, to root out the darnel, to rid the Church of those who do not measure up.



Jesus' answer is very clear. It is not for us to tear out the weeds: rather this is for God to do when harvest time comes. The reason for this in Jesus' teaching is very clear. The good and the evil, the beautiful and the ugly, the perfect and the imperfect, are so closely entwined together in the life of the Church that in our efforts to remove the less than perfect from the Church we might find ourselves inadvertently also removing much that is good in the Church.

None of this, of course, is to suggest that we should simply sit back and allow evil to flourish in the Church because God will bring everything right in the end. Nothing could be further from the truth. But what this does suggest is that, in tackling evil in the Church, we must do so in communion with the mind and heart of Jesus – and to do this we will need to know him more fully and love him more truly than many of us perhaps do at the moment.

If all of this is generally true of the Church as a whole it is equally true of each one of us. Each of us is a mixture of the noble and the unworthy, of high mindedness and selfishness, of heroism and cowardice, of generosity and meanness of spirit.

And, of course, if this is true of the community of the Church and of each of us as individuals, it will equally be true of those we seek to serve in our particular corner of the Church's life and ministry. As disciples, and within that as people who have been entrusted with a particular mission in the Church, we are called to reflect the face of Christ to everyone and this, of course, includes both those we seek to serve and those who seek to serve with us - our brothers and sisters in the Church's mission.

There is, therefore, always something particularly distressing when people who are so generous and kind to those for whom they work are so much less generous and kind to those with whom they work.

Growing up in the field of the Church, and in that little patch of the field which is your particular agency, the weeds and the wheat will be inextricably entwined together. This will be the case in those you seek to serve. It will be the case in those with whom you work. It will be the case within your own life - within your own heart. It is up to God to sort out the weeds from the wheat, not us. It is our job to reflect the face of Christ to everyone we meet, no matter our personal feelings towards them or our judgements about them. As Pope Francis keeps reminding us, Jesus is the face of the Father's mercy. As disciples of Jesus we are called to reflect this same face to all whom we meet. The judgement is not for us to make, the condemnation is certainly not for us to pronounce, the rejection is not for us to enact. Rather, it is both our vocation and our privilege, as disciples of Jesus called to mission in the Church today, to be the signs and bearers of the



compassion, the mercy, the hospitality and the large-heartedness of Christ to all those we encounter in anyway.

It is for this grace that we pray today.