

Serving Berlin's English-speaking Catholic Community since 1957



Catholic Community

Member of the English-Speaking Mission

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Our Mission Statement: The All Saints Catholic Community is a fully integrated, multicultural community with English as its unifying language. It is an open, warm, welcoming, inclusive community that prays together and celebrates its unity in diversity.

August 10, 2014 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a • Psalm 85:9-14 • Romans 9:1-5 • Matthew 14:22-33

Celebrant: Fr. Wolfgang Schonecke

Holy Father's prayer intentions for August 2014

Refugees: That refugees, forced by violence to abandon their homes, may find a generous welcome and the protection of their rights.

Oceania: That Christians in Oceania may joyfully announce the faith to all the people of that region.

The Kingdom of God means: God is working in our lives right here and now.

One of the most misunderstood gospel terms is the phrase "*kingdom of God*" or "*kingdom of heaven*." It's a very significant concept. Jesus begins his public ministry with the proclamation, "*The kingdom of God is close at hand!*" To misunderstand the kingdom of God is to misunderstand the ministry of the historical Jesus. So is this kingdom of heaven something we expect after our physical death? No, this kingdom does not refer to the life we are expecting to experience after our physical death. When Jesus speaks of the kingdom of heaven, he describes God working in our lives right here and now.

The earthly ministry of Jesus revolves around two things: making people aware of God's actions and demonstrating the different facets of that kingdom. In teaching about the kingdom of heaven, Jesus frequently employs parables. He employs parables to help his followers see the reality of their lives in ways most people never notice.

In the **kingdom parable**, Jesus reminds us that God doesn't just single out the good to work with (Mt 13:24-30). God does not single out the good to work with, no!, God's presence is to be made visible in a "mixed world" – a world inhabited by both wheat and weeds – this is our world.

So Jesus wants us to produce a zealous effort to make God's kingdom perfect on earth? No! When we look back in history, those zealous efforts always led to fanaticism – Christian fanaticism... Jesus warns that a too zealous effort to make God's kingdom perfect on earth will result in lots of good people being torn out with those we consider to be

bad weeds. When we are too zealous, we tear good people out together with those we consider bad weeds... Jesus assures us: God will eventually take care of that part of the kingdom's work. Our job is to keep planting the wheat.

Jesus thinks it is important to remind us that the kingdom is God's, not ours. When we attempt to take over the kingdom of God it ceases to produce the results God intends. This seems to be why both the author of **Wisdom** and **Paul** stress our own human limitations.

The **Wisdom** writer puts God acting in our lives in the center of his message (Wisdom 12:13, 16-19). God is acting in our lives in spite of all the obstacles we place in God's path. We read: "*God, you do what is right because you have the strength to do so, and your great power makes you merciful to everyone. When anyone doubts your strength, you show how strong you are, and you correct anyone who understands and still doubts*" (16f). Instead of expecting us to be judges, God has a different job description for us: "*God, by the things you have done you have taught your people that a person who is righteous must also be kind*" (19).

Let us have a look at St **Paul** (Romans 8:26-27): Does Paul think that only strong-willed, judgmental people can proclaim God's presence in the world? No, certainly not! Who are the proclaimers of God's presence in our world for Paul? He writes: "*The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness – the Spirit comes to help us, weak as we are*" (26a). The Apostle continues: "*For we do not know how we ought to pray; the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express. – When we don't know what to pray for, the Spirit prays for us in ways that cannot be put into words*" (26b). True disciples have to admit they are not even certain themselves what to pray for. Without the Spirit's guidance they would probably be praying for things which are against God's will.

Getting back to the wheat and weeds in the story Jesus tells in the gospel, how can we then be comfortable judging the actions of others? Only "*the one who searches hearts knows the intention of the Spirit because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will – All of our thoughts are known to God. He can understand what is in the mind of the Spirit, as the Spirit prays for God's people*" (27).

Are we conscious what we do when we tear out weeds? When we tear out weeds that impede us from what **we** conceive of as our clear path of growth? Then we might actually put an end to **God's** plan of growth. We can transfer this easily to Christian communities: When we tear out weeds that impede us from what **we** conceive of as our clear path of growth, then we might actually put an end to **God's** plan of growth.

cf <http://www.dignityusa.org/breath/july-20-2008-sixteenth-sunday-year>

Fr Wolfgang Felber SJ

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