



SAINT MARGARET  
PARISH

16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A

A few weeks ago I was using a bible of Fr. Marty's that had been given to me when I found a letter dated 1955. It was a note from Fr. Marty's parents, ironically during his year as a deacon too.

*Dear Marty,*

*Dad and I just got thru reading your nice letter and it made us happy to know that you are so happy. We, too, are just like you are ... scared but happy and wonder why God has chosen us, and gave us this great blessing, a son a priest, and that soon your consecrated hands will bless us. We often wonder and realize that we don't deserve this great joy, that we did very little for God, and yet he blessed us so much.*

*And Marty, don't feel that you owe us so much. You have already given us very much by being the nice, good, and wonderful son that you are. And we know that if you make as good a priest as you do a son, then no matter where you will be your people will love you as much as we do. And our prayer will always be that God will bless you always.*

*Love,*

*Mother and Dad*

This letter so clearly presents to us a simple yet profound example of faith in the kingdom of heaven. Not a hope for some far off place in the clouds, but the presence and power of the kingdom of God here. In this note, we hear an exchange between good yet unassuming people, grappling with just that; understanding the awesome power of the kingdom of heaven in their lives. Just think 1955, this ordinary man, not wealthy or powerful...not a strong political candidate or influential business leader....56 years later...what impact his life has had on so many...how his faith has spread to influence so many people.

It is this faith in the kingdom of heaven that Jesus tries to help His Apostles as He tries to help us in understanding today. He uses three parables in the gospel to do this. Unfortunately, in our contemporary world we try to over-explain everything which causes these parables to lose their punch, if you will. We place them into these very neat and refined categories where the point of each parable is easily understood, accepted and obvious. Yet that's not how Jesus used the parables 2,000 years ago. Parables were meant to be shocking, startling, even a bit bold. Today is no different. Jesus uses the image of a mustard seed not to present this nice and very saccharin image of heaven. Rather this image of the mustard seed is to be very real and emphatic....drawing on the reality that when a mustard seed is planted...while small it ends up being this bush that spreads all over. He uses the

image of the woman using yeast in dough...highlighting the stark reality that you can't limit the yeast to one portion of the dough. Rather it spreads throughout the entire dough...causing a change and impact.

These real images of the mustard seed and yeast open our eyes to see that Jesus invites our faith to be the same. He draws us to have a faith that is not contained in the small confines of this church, or even limit it to our home or neighborhood. Instead, faith needs to be able to grow into all areas of our life. Our faith in the kingdom should make us look at people differently, seeing a real responsibility to care for all people. Faith causes us to act differently at work or on a sports' team or with friends. Faith needs to even impact how we vote, not merely looking for what benefits us but that the poor and oppressed are helped. In other words faith causes us to see things differently.

This final parable is proof of that. Who among us would not say...pull those weeds out! It will give more room for the wheat to grow and who wants to even see the weeds. Yet that is not how God works...He sees differently than we do. And so I think we return to Fr. Marty's letter and seek to embody a spirit of acceptance, even though we don't always understand God.

My friends, these parables provide us with a lot. A lot of insight into ourselves and a lot of insight into God. Perhaps the only other thing to say about these parables would be the favorite words of Fr. Marty...think about it.