



Reflection 16th Week of the Year 19 / 20 July
by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“After sin you will grant repentance”

Last weekend, my Reflection arose from a Pilgrimage to the shrine of St Rita of Cascia and the Year I spent with the Recollect Augustinians at St Rita’s College, Honiton, in Devon. Leaving the Recollect Augustinians, I joined the Diocese and was sent to Cotton College in Staffordshire for 6th Form studies. In those days, before going to Major Seminary, we had a Spiritual Year at a place called Grove Park, Hampton on the Hill, near Warwick.

The old house has now been demolished; it belonged to the Dormer Family, Recusant Catholics, who held on to the Catholic Faith at the time of the Reformation. The deceased of the family who owned Grove Park are buried in the cemetery of St Charles Borromeo Church, Hampton on the Hill.

My mind went back to that year on Wednesday afternoon this past week, when I visited the beautiful gardens at Kiftsgate Court, Mickleton, Chipping Campden. The experience at Grove Park involved 2 hours “manual labour” each afternoon and I spent many days in the course of the year on my knees, weeding paths and flower beds at Grove Park House. I can still remember the beautiful aroma coming from some of the flowers and bushes.

I am sure, if I, and other students, had suggested to the Rector of the Seminary, Canon Cushworth, or the Gardener, Redg, that we leave the weeds to grow as suggested by Our Lord in the Gospel today, we would not have got much of a hearing. In fact, it would have been rejected as, frankly, a bit OTT. And, I noticed at Kiftsgate just how well the weeding is done. I have heard it was designed by 3 generations of women and is a family run garden now.

Little wonder then, that the disciples ask Our Lord about the meaning of the Parable of the Wheat and the Darnel, a type of weed sown by an enemy. The Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God, is explained by Jesus using Parables: stories from everyday life and from nature, that illustrate a point in his teaching. There are 3 in today’s Gospel: the mustard seed growing into a bush in which the birds can find rest, the yeast that causes the dough to rise, and the one I have begun with, the Wheat and the Darnel, a type of weed. All 3 are about the growth of the Kingdom, that is God’s reign among us.

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What stands out in this particular Parable, is the generosity of God. His Kingdom is a wonderful free gift to us, and it is often seen as co-terminus with the Church since the time of the great Theologian St Augustine, in the 300s.

God's Kingdom, his reign, is already with us, especially in His Word and the Sacraments, and our way of life. One of the most striking things about God's Way, the Rule of God, is his mercy: so, when you come up against the hard facts of life, where the evil actions of many seem to triumph over the good, this parable illustrates God's way: he does not destroy the enemy of the good, though there will be a final reckoning!

When we reflect on the Parable in relation to our own personal lives, we can see how often there is a mixture of good and evil, and we are glad, that God is merciful, that He gives us time so that we can even allow what is evil to strengthen the good. I suppose, without getting too technical, that was the thinking with the Corona virus, allowing the virus to spread, if that is the right word, to create "herd immunity".

We can envisage in life – morally speaking – some of the evil that continues to live in us, enabling us to develop attitudes, that are more merciful towards ways of living that are wrong. When we think back to the past, the wider Church was quick to burn heretics, and she didn't take the attitude of Jesus in today's parable, into her own dealings with those who espoused wrong views.

This is a difficult area to enter into: we do not deny there is good and evil, right and wrong. The question is how we apply the power of "binding and losing" given to the Church's Pastors in the context of a "merciful" Lord whom we believe in the words of the Book of Wisdom today "after sin Will grant repentance."; illustrated in the Parable of the Farmer (Jesus Himself) who does not rush to destroy the weed in case in doing so, it affects the growth of the beautiful wheat, of the Kingdom!

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