

DEACON JOHN'S HOMILY

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 12, 2020

There was a farmer who worked very hard at his farm for many years. He cleared away the stumps, the brush, plowed the fields, he planted and harvested. He constructed barns and grain bins and created a fine farming operation. One day his church pastor visited the farm and was quite impressed, and he reminded the farmer several times: Just look what you and God have done with this farm . . . you and God have turned this place into a beautiful and productive farm. You and God have done a great job. Finally, the farmer turned to his pastor and said: "Yes pastor, but you should have seen this place when God was working it by himself."

Jesus' parable in today's gospel is an invitation for us to reflect on our readiness to receive the seeds of God's Word in our heart and do something.

Clearly - at least I hope it's clear - that to hear God's word is to spend time in prayer. And what an opportunity for more prayer time with sheltering in place, restricted shopping and our limited social lives . . . as we continue to adjust to this new normal, we have to admit, we have more time to pray, read and appreciate more our friends and families. And the hardest part of this new normal is not knowing what the future will be like. And it's not just Covid-19. There are renewed demands for justice and equality, a reconsidering icons and heroes of the past, a fragile economy and again the uncertainty of what the future holds.

As we spend time in prayer, what do you find that you are asking of God? Do you ask God to take us back to a time when life was easier? Maybe pray to change other people? Are we asking for God to change our world? Or do you ask God to open our hearts to change?

Back in April, Pope Francis reflected on this international crisis that has brought the world's people and the global economy to its knees. He compared the pandemic to the boulder at the tomb of Jesus. For the first followers of Jesus the stone that sealed the tomb of Jesus created an unknown future full of questions and no answers. That stone could have been a sign of isolation, fear and anxiety but remember the two Mary's as they walked to the tomb of Jesus to anoint his body, they questioned who would roll back the stone for them at the entrance to the tomb. But that looming problem didn't stop them from pursuing their task. They did not allow themselves to be paralyzed by anxiety, fear and the unknown.

Pope Francis reminds us: "We are not alone, the Lord goes before us on our journey, and removes the stones that paralyze us." Our response to this pandemic should first be that we are open to the Spirit - the Spirit who can fill us with creativity and imagination of what is possible – instead of what is no longer possible. The Spirit who inspires our faith, provides hope, and encourages charity.

By your being here in person or participating on-line and continuing to spend time with our Lord in prayer is evidence that you continue to be inspired by the Spirit and you are open to the Word of God, which Isaiah so artistically described in our first reading: the Word of God falls from heaven like rain and snow and does not return until it has watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful.

Our world, the kingdom of God . . . continues to be fertile and fruitful . . . when we do our part.

