

Chaplain's Bulletin July 23, 2023



Dear Folks,

Jesus was right. Common on the Christian journey is that we keep getting surprised about how right Jesus was in His teachings. Going from reading words on paper to seeing the reality in life is really something. Jesus tells the parable of the wheat and the weeds in Matt.13. He warned us that there would be good and bad in the church, but it comes as a surprise when we see it happening. Many people have reported that they stopped going to church because they were disappointed by fellow parishioners or church leaders, and being fair, some fellow parishioners and some church leaders can be very disappointing. But what they are saying is they are leaving the Church that Jesus started because it is the way He told us it would be. Part of the way He sanctifies us is in our dealing with the sins, flaws, and imperfections of others in church.

So how should we react to that? This means that we have to put up with each other, and we are brothers and sisters in spite of those flaws. It does not mean that sin can be taken lightly or ignored. We affect each other, and the sins of one drag us all down. Those who sin and refuse to repent are in bad trouble.

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause sin! Such things must come, but woe to the one through whom they come (Matt 18:6-7; see Mark 9:42 and Luke 17:1-3).” People who insist that wrong is right and they can be devout Catholics while persisting in sin and making it clear they think this is right are leading others to sin, and Jesus makes clear they are in bad trouble. What about excommunication? Is that not contrary to Jesus’ teaching on the wheat and the weeds? We get guidance from St. Paul: “It is widely reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of a kind not found even among pagans—a man living with his father’s wife. And you are inflated with pride. Should you not rather have been sorrowful? The one who did this deed should be expelled from your midst. I, for my part, although absent in body but present in spirit, have already, as if present, pronounced judgment on the one who has committed this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus; when you have gathered together and I am with you in spirit with the power of the Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).” Excommunication is drastic medicine for drastic situations and ordered to save someone’s soul. It is also to protect others in the Church from being misled. St. Paul continues: “Your boasting is not appropriate. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough (1 Corinthians 5:6)?” Jesus and Paul’s teaching on leaven tell us that a small influence can change the whole community, for better or for worse. Remember what Jesus said about leading little ones to sin.

What about telling people they shouldn’t receive communion while they are persisting in sin? Is that not contrary to Jesus’ teaching to love sinners? St. Paul guides us here too: “Therefore whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a

considerable number are dying (1 Corinthians 11:27-30).” Encouraging people to receive communion is not always loving.

In adult faith formation classes, when we get to explaining that sin is doing what we know is wrong on purpose, there is always one person who asks, “wouldn’t it be better not to learn about sin then, so whatever we do we won’t be sinning?” If one unknowingly does wrong, even if they are not guilty of sin, they still do harm to their own souls and the people around them.

Unlike the actual plants, we all have some wheat in us, and we all have some weed in us. Our task is to help each other be as wheaty as possible.

Blessings,

Fr. Jim