

In the Gospel today, Jesus is talking about the Kingdom of Heaven. Where is the Kingdom of Heaven? One could answer this question on a variety of different levels but today I would like to focus on just one. The Kingdom of Heaven is found right here (point to heart) inside each one of us. From the very beginning God has planted good seed inside the field of our heart and we are called to nurture and grow this seed and how we live out our lives and how we treat one another. And often the weeds of life find themselves in the field of our heart because of what we have done (our own sin), what others have done to us, or by those things which we have no control over. The weeds of our life are part of what make us who we are, and God uses the weeds of life to bring about conversion in our life and the life of others if we allow Him. You see, weeds can often bring about meaning and understanding in our lives that otherwise we would not have known.

The first example I would like to share is a weed for which I had no control over. A couple of years ago, I thought I had a high level of trust in God until I was diagnosed with cancer. This type of weed can be fast growing and quickly cut off the life of grace that God wants us to enjoy. On the outside, I was going about reassuring everyone and making sure to tell them it was going to be okay – and this was genuine in terms of my worry about others. But on the inside, I was having an inner struggle as I faced my mortality for the first time in a real way. I began to wonder why I went through all these years of formation to then be diagnosed with cancer. I seriously was doubting my trust in God. Fortunately, I was on retreat and God, who is the Master Gardener, puts a priest in front of me who had experienced the exact same thing. His response to me was very simple- it is not that you do not trust God, it is you are learning to trust God at a whole new level. This really resonated with me and helped me to focus on how this weed in my life could be beneficial to me spiritually and to others. It helped me to see my life not in earthly terms but in heavenly terms. Now, I share this story when I do different retreats which then may have a positive impact on those around me.

The second example I would like to share is the weed of what others have done to me. Many years ago, someone wrote an anonymous letter about me claiming I was not performing my functions as a leader that was fair to all people. I did not get to see the letter (it was only read to me after many requests), they did not ask me what I thought, they proceeded to send me home for 1 month while they interviewed about 130 employees that I had managed over the last 5 years or so. I knew I had done nothing wrong, but the weeds of anxiety, doubt, fear, and anger started to take hold of me. My relationship with the Master Gardner was not very good then and the devil was having his way with my heart. I felt like my identity was trying to be replaced by this false identity that others were trying to create. What I have learned in looking back on this is that my identity is not found in the struggles in difficulties of life, including injustice, but that my identity is found in the God who created me in His likeness and image. There were so many grudges I held onto for many years. But holding a grudge was just my desire to judge. In the readings today, we are reminded that only God ultimately separates the wheat from the weeds.

And the final example is the weeds in my life because of my own sin. For so many years, I would rationalize and justify some of my decisions or how I would respond to certain situations. These weeds were large and often blocked the rays of Gods light – His love and mercy. Things did not change until I really started opening myself up to the sacraments. Especially the sacraments of the Eucharist and reconciliation. God's grace is like miracle grow in our lives that allows us to grow beyond the weeds in our life. We must have faith in the transformative power the sacraments can have in our life. If we are open to receiving them frequently and without any reservation, God's grace, mercy and love will pour through us with abundance.

I will leave you with a question to ponder as you go through the next week. What are the weeds in your life? And how are you going to allow God to come in and be the Master Gardner of your heart?