

Outdoor Mass for Married Couples
July 23, 2017

A young woman was getting married. She went to visit her grandmother to ask for any thoughts or advice she had about marriage. Her grandmother had been married for 50 years.

The grandmother first explained that she is a firm believer that she needs God's help to make her marriage work. And she was grateful that the Lord hears her prayers.

The grandmother explained that not long after the wedding, she wrote a prayer that she says every day. The prayer goes like this:

Lord, give me wisdom to understand my husband.
Lord, give me patience when he doesn't listen and when he is lazy.
Lord, give me the merciful love to forgive him when things go wrong.

Thank you Lord for these blessings. Amen.

The young woman said, "Grandma, that's a very nice prayer, but I noticed that you do not ask God for strength."

The Grandmother answered, "That's right. If I pray for his strength, I will surely beat Grandpa to death."

I thought of that story because St. Paul says in today's reading from his letter to the Romans that "the Holy Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; because we do not know how to pray as we ought."

St. Paul tells us that we need to ask the Holy Spirit for help in our prayer because the Holy Spirit seeks what is good for us according to God's will.

Of course wisdom, patience, forgiveness, and merciful love are all consistent with God's will.

The Grandma was wise in telling her soon to be married granddaughter that asking for God's strength is not a good thing to do if that power was used in anger.

The Grandmother fulfilled the granddaughter's request for advice, and her thoughts and her prayer indicate the presence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in her life.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.

The conversation with the granddaughter suggests that the Grandmother did not fear her husband. Instead, she had the wisdom to recognize the fear or temptation of causing harm to another person if there was no other way.

But she found another way. She found a way to embrace her husband in peace and love and mercy and forgiveness.

She found a way to live with her husband as her significant other for more than 50 years instead of living against him, which she knew would never last very long without living that way.

The thoughts and advice of the Grandmother also remind me of what Jesus is saying in the Gospel reading today. The Lord Jesus uses three parables to teach us about the Kingdom of God.

First, there's the image of the bad seed that is mixed in with the good seed. The two produce plants that grow up together.

A reasonable reaction is to pull up all the weeds. But the downside is that the good stuff could be destroyed in the process.

So the wise advice is to let them grow up together until the harvest. By then, whatever is good will be saved and whatever is no good will not be saved.

That way of looking at life, the life of God's Kingdom, is seen in the plan of the Grandmother who says,

“I don’t want to overcome my husband with strength and power. I want to live with him and grow old with him in peace through love and mercy and forgiveness.”

Just think for a moment how much of the fuss over how to have peace in our world today is moved by the idea that peace can only be achieved by strength and more power including weapons of mass destruction.

And even closer to home there is more and more violence in cities and towns everywhere.

So it’s good to be reminded by the Lord Jesus that we need to keep in mind how to live together even when there are weeds that seem to be taking over the good ground.

In hearing that, it’s enough to make anyone of us wonder how the Kingdom of heaven will ever become a reality.

The Lord Jesus offers an insight into that reality when he says, the Kingdom of God is like a tiny mustard seed that grows into a large tree and it is like yeast that is mixed in with the flour which would never become real bread without it.

Our real bread is the Bread of Life, the very Body of Christ that we receive from this altar.

I cannot tell you how many times persons have told me over the years that they could never do without the Holy Eucharist.

I cannot tell you how many times persons have told me that not only would they starve, but they would not be able to live in peace with members of their families, with their coworkers, with people in their neighborhood, if they did not have the peace, the love, the mercy, and the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus in their lives.

And those blessings that come to us through the Holy Eucharist flow from the Lord Jesus who was crucified for us and for everyone, including the good seed and the bad seed.

The Lord Jesus is the best teacher of what the Grandmother learned and passed on to her granddaughter who asked for advice as she was preparing for marriage.

Every day for more than 50 years, Grandma prayed these words:

Lord, give me wisdom to understand my husband.

Lord, give me patience when he doesn't listen and when he is lazy.

Lord, give me the merciful love to forgive him when things go wrong.

Thank you Lord for these blessings. Amen.

Grandma did not ask God for strength, because if she had it, she was afraid of what she would do to Grandpa.

It's a cute story. But there is a message there for all of us; married or unmarried.

It's more than likely that Grandpa is not a bad guy. And even if he had his faults, Grandma chose to live with him in the manner that Jesus speaks about in parables today.

For sure, Grandma's message was especially about prayer. Before we receive the Bread of life, the Body and Blood of Christ, we are going to pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Pay attention to the words in which we tell God that we want his Kingdom to come.

The Lord Jesus taught us that prayer and it reminds us that wanting his Kingdom comes before asking for our daily bread.

It's not a question of which one. For us it's both. It's for our good. The Lord Jesus wants only the best for us. And it's for the good of all; including the weeds.

Think about it. Pray about it. Do something about it in your daily living according to the Gospel.

And if you have questions and are still not quite sure about this, you might want to find a Grandma who has been trying to faithfully live the Gospel by seeking God's kingdom. Find someone like that who takes it to prayer; someone who recognizes that the Holy Spirit at work in her life.