

Sexagesima 2023  
Sermon-Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
2 Cor. 11.19-30 St. Luke 8.4-15

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Saint Joseph Parish has a long-standing commitment to keeping Sermons, Discussion Groups and Coffee Hours, free of partisan politics...either Church or secular. There is a very good reason we maintain this commitment. It works!

This morning's Epistle from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians explains why ego-driven partisanship can wreck the spiritual life of a parish. Paul writes...

*...“Because you think you are so smart...you tolerate fools and their destructive behavior...”*

These are tough words...motivated by tough love, from our friend, Saint Paul. Like all of Paul's letters...his message to the Corinthians has a universal application to the Church today. Why would anyone tolerate foolish behavior? In fact, we shouldn't.

In current usage...the meaning of the negative **not** to suffer fools gladly implies anger with people we think are stupid. That in itself is opposed to the basic Christian ideal of loving our neighbor. We have to remember everyone is our neighbor...not just the people next door.

However, Paul is using the word *fool* in a very different way. He is being intentionally sarcastic when he accuses the Corinthians of being so smart they tolerate fools and their destructive behavior. Not only are they tolerating fools...they do so **gladly!**

Our friend, Paul, founded the Church in Corinth. He left clergy in charge of the parish and prayed for its growth. Sometime later itinerant preachers arrived who started turning the people against Paul. He brands them *“false apostles...who lie about their work...and disguise themselves to look like the real apostles for Christ.”*

Paul ramps up the sarcasm a bit when he says no one can accuse him of being a fool...but if fools like to boast about their own accomplishments...he has a few things to boast about. After all...he's a better Hebrew

than the false teachers; he's a descendant of Abraham; he's Christ's servant; he's been shipwrecked; he's been in jail many times; and he has to worry about the churches.

Paul knew just as did Jesus some people just like to cause problems...to be the center of attention. The challenge is to disallow destructive behavior by addressing it head on. Everything must be done out of love and compassion...not out of a sense of prideful superiority. Sometimes we will succeed and sometimes we will not.

The Gospel is also about successes and failures. The parable of the farmer who went out to plant grain is a story about God's Kingdom, and the Church's role in spreading the Good News. Some seed fell on a path and birds ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground but failed to thrive because they didn't get enough water. Some seed fell among weeds and the weeds choked the life out of them. Some seed fell on good soil and produced healthy crops.

This is one of the few parables Jesus takes the time to explain. Jesus is the farmer sowing seed. The seed is his spoken word and the written word...the Bible. God extends his grace to everyone. Not everyone accepts the Good News. Some people get the message and respond...others refuse to hear the message at all. Some use the Gospel for their own selfish reasons...like the false teachers in Corinth.

Jesus entrusted the growth of the Church to the Apostles. All of us share in spreading the Good News. Paul went about planting Church. The Church is a mixed bag...just like the real world. We pray people will hear the Good News and the Church will grow. One thing we must never do is become discouraged. Paul didn't give up on “Those Corinthians”...Jesus didn't give up on us.

Paul's Letter to the Corinthians and the Gospel story about the farmer planting grain are about the Church...and we are Church! Tolerating foolish and destructive behavior is simply not smart. We are called to be wise stewards and smart farmers...planting God's word and watching it grow.

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