

Homily 16th Sunday Year A 2023

This year we were encouraged to let things grow in the month of May and not cut the grass. In the patch of grass between the presbytery and the flats we did exactly that. The result turned the garden into what could appear as chaos at first site. Different lanky grasses shot up, weeds grew in abundance and wild poppies continued day after day. Even on the hot days when the poppies disappeared early in the heat of the sun, they reappeared the next morning. Some of the weeds, however, began to flower and introduced other colours into the garden and, of course, there were the inevitable dandelions. You could call it a potpourri although many a gardener would have winced at the sight. If the lawn had been cut, we would never have seen the colours or the different grasses and been the poorer for it. And after a while, the garden began to display its own kind of beauty amidst the chaos.

Story: (Anthony de Mello sj)

A man who took great pride in his lawn found himself with a large crop of dandelions. He tried every method he knew to destroy them. Still they plagued him. Finally, he wrote to the Department of Agriculture. He enumerated all the things he had tried and closed his letter with the question: "What shall I do now?" In due course the reply came: "We suggest you learn to love them."

I was proud of my lawn but I, too, was plagued with dandelions that I kept fighting with every means in my power. So, learning to love them was no easy task.

I began by talking to them each day. Cordial. Friendly. They maintained a sullen silence. They were smarting from the war I had waged against them—and were suspicious of my motives. But the day came when they smiled. And relaxed. And we started to be friends.

My lawn, of course, was ruined. But how attractive my garden became!

Don't you think that this might be the way that Jesus sees us? Well aware of the weeds in our lives, Jesus lets them grow but looking at our lives as a whole he sees its beauty, that scattered beauty and colour that permeate our lives. If we focus on the weeds, we will miss its goodness and beauty. We are only too aware that, like weeds, our faults keep finding a way of repeating themselves. God forgives so that we can focus more on being caring, compassionate, bringing hope and goodness to others, inspiring them, lifting them up when they feel down-in-the-mouth; bringing laughter and joy to people, showing reverence, respect and dignity. The more we do this, the less time we will have to worry about the weeds and we might even begin to see that sacred beauty that Jesus sees in us.

Saturday is/was the feast of Mary Magdalene. Elizabeth Johnson wrote about her as... *a sacrament of God's own fidelity to the dying Jesus, a faithful witness to the hope that he is not totally abandoned." Mary's is the beauty of a love that "empowers the sufferer to bear the pain.... knowing that we are not abandoned makes all the difference." It's the beauty and tenderness of a grief and loss that drew her to the tomb in the dark of a pre-dawn morning, seeking balm for her broken heart.*

Beauty, authentic beauty, unlocks the yearning of the human heart, the profound desire to know, to love, to go towards the other. It's what inspires the best in us. This is the beauty of the yearning that drew Mary Magdalene to the tomb where she encountered the one who had claimed her heart and found that he had conquered death.

We are all blessed with this beauty in baptism!!

Two old men were sitting on a park bench watching the young women jog by. One jogger stops and gets upset at the attention. "Just who are you staring at, old man?" she asks. He drops his head and apologizes saying "I'm sorry, but you remind me of my dear wife. She was a dark-haired beauty just like you and I miss her terribly." The young lady smiles, tells him she's sorry for being angry, gives him a kiss on the cheek, and jogs away.

He then turns to his friend and says "That's three for me and two for you, your turn!"