

October 29, 2024 Fr. Peter Choi

Once upon a time there was a man who had a dream. In his dream he was walking down the streets of the big city. He saw people living in poverty asking him for pocket change, sick people being rushed to a hospital, pretty much everything that goes on in our society and nothing out of the ordinary. So he thought, until he saw a large store called “everything for free!” Curious to know what they had at the store, he walked through the large entrance door. To his surprise, he saw Jesus standing behind the counter. Jesus said to him, “Welcome to my store! In this store you will find everything you will need in your life. And the best part, everything is for free. You can look around and make a list of the things you want, and once you’re finished you can hand me your list and I will give them to you.” The man looked around the store, and true enough, everything he’s ever wanted was at this store, especially all the things that can solve the problems of the world: food that will put an end to hunger and poverty, medicine to heal all diseases, peace for the world, love and harmony in the family, and many more. He hurried back to the counter with his list. Jesus looked at it, and started to pull out small packets from the large drawers and placed them carefully in a brown paper bag and handed it to him. Completely puzzled by what happened he asked, “Jesus, what are these that you gave me?” Jesus explained, “I gave you everything you’ve asked for. I do not offer finished products here. I provide the seeds of everything, and you have to plant those seeds and make sure to nurture them so they grow and bear fruits.”

Of course, God is perfect and He does not need us or depend on our work to accomplish His plan. But God chooses to accomplish great things through you and me, imperfect human beings. God does this to bestow on us a sense of dignity and enable us to merit the reward of our labour one day in God’s Kingdom in heaven. And God does this by entrusting to each and every one of us a part to play, for us to make our unique contributions to building the Kingdom of God. Jesus teaches us how we can go about building God’s Kingdom through the use of two

parables: a parable of the mustard seed and a parable of yeast mixed into flour.

At a first glance a mustard seed, like any other seed, looks small and insignificant. But we know that seeds are important because a tiny seed contains all the genetic materials that in due time unleash its potential, and grows into what God has created it to be. Everyone who's ever planted a plant or tree knows that it takes time and our dedication to grow them. It requires patience, and akin to the instrumentality of a farmer, we need to take great care and provide regular maintenance to nurture it to its full maturity. In His infinite wisdom God didn't hand us the fruits but he provided us with seeds that we have to plant so that seeds will grow and bear fruits. It's the same with us. God doesn't just hand us His Kingdom, but created us as unique individuals with unique sets of gifts and talents to make unique contributions to organically build God's Kingdom. God has planted into us everything we need in this life to grow into full maturity as faithful disciples to spread God's Kingdom. Remember Jesus established His Church with just 12 men and entrusted them the mission of the Church, to evangelize all nations by way of being a witness, including even martyrdom, for the Church to grow into maturity. The Church continued to grow despite persecution and martyrdom during the early Church. And despite challenges in every age, the Church continued to grow as a result of many who dedicated their lives to Christ!

When we look at the second parable, the parable of the yeast, just like the mustard seed, yeast also has a small beginning but that small amount becomes the agent that changes everything! It's interesting to note that Jesus said 3 measures of flour, which is an enormous amount of flour! It's like 80 pounds of flour that will become about 120 pounds of bread! Compared to the large amount of flour, all 80 lbs, all you need is just a pinch of yeast, 1.5 lb. You may think it's a tiny amount, but that's all you need in order to transform the texture of the bread. Once fermented, yeast will grow and permeate through the entire mix resulting in the bread rising, becoming light and fluffy, which is not only easier to eat

but tastier in my opinion. All this takes place hidden from our eyes. When I read about the lives of saints and many admirable people whom we may consider living saints, they did pretty much the same. Quietly living out their faith through works of charity and evangelizing those who are around them without being visible or drawing attention to themselves. One thing I noticed about them is that they inspire others by their example, and they have the ability to transform the hearts of people. When Mother Teresa was alive many people traveled to Kolkutta just to see her and spend time with her, wanting to make a contribution to her works of charity, and just to be part of it. So how can we become an inspiration to others like Mother Teresa?

I once heard a story about a young lady whose life was full of challenges and setbacks and she didn't know what to do to overcome them. To give her a valuable lesson, her father brought her to the kitchen. Without saying a word he took three pots that were the same size and filled them with the same amount of water. He set the pots on the stove and turned on the fire to high heat. Once the three pots began to boil, he placed potatoes in one pot, eggs in the second pot, and ground coffee beans in the third pot. He stood by the three boiling pots without saying a word. This only seemed to have made his daughter annoyed and confused. Seeing that his daughter has become impatient and confused, he told her, "just wait and see." After twenty minutes he turned off the stove. He took the potatoes out of the pot and placed them in a bowl. He pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. He poured coffee in a cup. Turning to her he asked. "What do you see?" "I see a potato, an egg, and coffee." He said, "touch the potato." She did and noted that they were soft. He then asked her to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, he asked her to sip the coffee. "What does this mean?" she asked. Her father answered, "When I put potatoes in the water it was initially hard, but it became soft. The eggs on the other hand were soft inside, but became hard inside. Boiling water changed Potatoes and eggs, but the coffee beans turned water into coffee." Our faith can be exactly the same. God created us to be like coffee to change everything around us, but if we don't turn to God we

can lose who we are and who we are called to be, and even makes us feel discouraged and turn away from God. When we depend on God and remain faithful during our challenges and be witnesses to Christ in the world, we will be able to transform this world into God's Kingdom.