**16th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [20th July, 2014]**

READINGS: Wisdom 12:13, 16-19 /Romans 8:26-27 /Matthew 13:24-43

THEME: THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

Beloved, what will be your answer to the question: ‘**Why are you in the church today**?’ You may probably answer: ‘I am here to worship my Lord and my God’. If you are here to worship God, let me ask you a further question: Why do you make time to worship God every Sunday? You may say: ‘To thank and praise God for what He has been doing for me.’

Is that all? You may add: ‘To thank and praise Jesus for dying for me.’ Why did He die for you? You may say: ‘to save me from my sins.’ Is that all? Did He save you so that you remain on this earth forever? ‘No’, you may answer: ‘He saved me so that I will be with God forever in heaven – to enjoy in the kingdom of heaven.’ Exactly! We are here today and every Sunday or anytime we gather because of our hope to enter THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. The kingdom of heaven is the ultimate, that’s why Jesus says: **‘Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven** …’ (Mt. 6:33).

The expression, ‘kingdom of heaven’ appears three times in today’s gospel (Mt. 13:24-43). In fact the ‘kingdom of heaven’ is the key message of the preaching of Jesus Christ. He began His ministry with the message, ‘**repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand**’ (Mt. 4:17). In the four gospels together, the term ‘**kingdom**’ appears 127 times, and in Matthew’s Gospel alone 56 times.

It is very easy to describe an earthly kingdom, e.g. Ashanti kingdom, UK. One can easily talk about: who the king or queen is; how he or she was chosen; geographical area or size of the kingdom; its population; etc. It is very easy to do this, because what we are describing is physical, it can be seen or measured. But the kingdom of heaven is not something physical. It is spiritual; it is a mystery; we can’t see everything about it whilst on this earth. To explain the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus chooses to use parables. That is, He uses things we know (wheat, weeds, seeds and yeast) to explain what we don’t know.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE KINGDOM

Let us now look at two aspects of the kingdom of heaven from the parables of today’s gospel reading: recruitment into the kingdom and its small beginning.

**Recruitment Exercise**: to tell us about the recruitment exercise, Jesus uses the parable of the wheat and weeds. We are familiar with US VISA LOTTERY. By the parable of the wheat and weed, Jesus is telling us that, **to enter heaven is not by lottery**, not by chance; rather it is God who selects; it is He who will at the end of time distinguish the WHEATS FROM THE WEEDS. May God select us for His kingdom – Amen!

Evil (represented by the weeds) can’t enter God’s kingdom; that is why Jesus says from the onset of his ministry: ‘**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ However, with God nothing is impossible and nothing is too late, so if we are WEEDS, because of our sins, may God turn us into WHEATS ripe for his kingdom, Amen!

**Small beginning**: to tell us that the recruitment exercise starts with a few but the end result will be an uncountable number of people in heaven, Jesus tells the parable of the mustard seed. It will be a number that this earth is too small to contain! May there be room in heaven for each of us! Amen! For our parents and siblings, amen! For our (deceased) grandparents, amen! For all our friends, amen! For all our parishioners, amen! For your children’s’ children, amen!

The third parable (in today’s gospel reading) of yeast in some dough of flour, like that of the mustard seed, is about the ever-increasing trend of the number of people entering God’s kingdom. Again, let our daily prayer be that ‘**when the saints go marching in …O Lord, I want to be in their number**.’

CONCLUSION

Finally, let me end with something I noticed three years ago about a friend of mine. He lives and works in UK with **work permit** but he says he doesn’t want to acquire a dual-citizenship because he aspires to be an MP in Ghana in the future. This earth is not our permanent home. We have **only work permit**. Let us not live here as if we will live here forever! Let us **aspire to be MPs of heaven** where we are citizens (Phil. 3:20-21). Amen!