

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 20, 2008

Deacon Kishore Kottana

This past weekend, I returned from a trip of San Francisco and New York City. In SFO, I was visiting a cousin of mine. She is 36 and her son is 3.5 years old. Her mom from India is visiting her currently.

It was a time to relax, pray, think and thank God for his goodness. I was able, also, to appreciate the goodness my Cousin showed me. She drove us to the near by lake for a picnic, to the city where we watched the July 4 fire works. We eat at an Indian buffet restaurant. We also visited a religious community of sisters and nearby Churches. At the end of my four-day stay, she very generously gave me a ride to the airport; my flight was past midnight. God is good; All the time!

My appreciation of my cousin's goodness became even more when I noticed the detail with which she took care of her 3.5 year old son. When in the middle of the night, my nephew woke her mother up; she quickly rose to attend to his needs. During cooking or cleaning if her son cried, she would go to him in haste, caress him, embrace him and provide for his needs. Here was an example of goodness to the point of dying to self. This mortification of herself brought a transformation in her son.

My cousin makes a living by conducting a day care center for little children, and by renting out two of her rooms. She told me, she and her little son have no medical insurance. They are managing, month by month, with not much to save. She was kind in accepting some money I gave her when I was with her in San Francisco. With that she got her car fixed. She was thankful. God is good, he sends help!

There was much good that I got to experience. Hers was a self sacrificing goodness. Our goodness necessarily flows out of God's infinite goodness and is made manifest in our daily actions.

In the Gospel today, Our Lord speaks of the good seed. He makes sure the good seed gets the moisture, sunlight, heat and air for its growth and fruitfulness. God's goodness is always watching over us. He helps us by uprooting any weeds that might hinder our growth. Jesus says, Then the upright will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Anyone who has ears should listen. (Mt. 13:43).

Jesus compares the good seed to the kingdom of Heaven. The good seed grows up into a tree and shelters birds in its branches. In order for the seed to become a plant, then develop into a tree, produce fruit, grow its branches so birds can build nests, the seed must share its goodness. The good seed must be willing to die to self. It must sacrifice its own being, trusting the farmer to bring out its goodness. We are the good seed and Jesus is the farmer.

Let us thank God for his abundant goodness. Goodness like a well that never goes empty. He is life giving goodness. Let us thank God for ourselves present here, for making us his family, for giving us his Son and his Mother. God gave us one another so we can support each other and go forward each day toward the kingdom of Heaven he has prepared for us.

God's goodness goes beyond the confines our home, our parish in Sandusky and beyond our diocese of Toledo. In the 1870's a bishop and five priests arrived on the south east coast of India, my birth place. The French missionaries brought with them seeds of faith. Good seed!

People of our home town were originally Hindus. My grand parents along with their parents and the whole village embraced Catholicism over 130 years ago. Since that time, our parish, deeply Catholic, produced hundreds of vocations to the priesthood and sisterhood. The Archbishop of our home diocese is from our parish. Among my many relatives two became priests and five became religious sisters. My grand father played the organ in the Church while his children sang Latin songs in the choir. They have a great respect for the Church, its priests and sisters and devoted to praying the rosary.

My parents live in India near the big city, Bombay (Mumbai). They are in their mid sixties. I am the oldest of five children. My name is Deacon Kishore Kottana and I am 43 years old. As a family we went to Mass every Sunday. All through my life in India, I witnessed too much poverty. I saw material and spiritual poverty; hunger and isolation.

At the same time, I watched the charity of my grand parents and my own parents. They showed compassion to the poor. When I was 17, I became an active member of our parish and started going to daily Mass, and with the parish association members visited the sick in the hospitals and homes and a home for destitute children. All this made a deep impact on my soul and with God's help, I resolved to give my life to serve Him; like the good seed.

When I started working at 17 years of age, I helped the poor with my pocket money. Later, I was distributing sandwiches to the people on the streets and train stations. I worked at the Naval Dockyard in Bombay for 18 years. I repaired machinery onboard warships and aircraft carriers. Then I became a supervisor of submarine repairs. Throughout my life in India, I could hear God speaking to me softly, saying, "come, follow me!" "You are the good seed, I have chosen you! You must die to self in order to do good!"

In 2000, the jubilee year, I received an invitation to go to Rome to study for the priesthood. I left my job and spent the next seven years in Rome until last summer. I studied philosophy and theology. The life of the Church – one, holy, catholic and apostolic – was clearly visible in Rome. I went to many of Pope's Masses and audiences in Rome. The Christian art and architecture helped my faith grow deeper. I grew in love of the Church.

Missionaries from outside India brought faith to us in India. I was inspired by lives of saints, as a child I thought of becoming a missionary. But being a missionary also calls one to die to self, to be like the good seed and be willing to be transformed. I let Jesus, the Sower, take control of my life.

Here I am, by God's grace, enjoying the privilege to be a missionary and serving here. Let us thank God for the parable of the good seed for choosing us to be good seed and pray that we can each respond to God's call with full generosity.