

Ordinary 16A - 2023

"Throw them out! Throw them out!"

The year was 1770. In a small Italian church, two altar boys were preparing for Benediction. Annibale Della Genga and Francesco Castiglioni entered the sacristy, put on their albs, and grabbed the heavy brass candlesticks. And then they began to bicker, arguing over who would stand on the priest's right for the procession. Their quibble escalated into a shouting match. Alarmed parishioners turned their heads to the back of the Church to see the commotion, and that's when it happened: Castiglioni cracked Della Genga over the head with his candlestick! Blood dripped from Della Genga's injury, and both boys began shoving each other. Shocked parishioners screamed,

"Throw them out! Throw them out!" So, the embarrassed priest grabbed the boys, led them to the door, and tossed them out of the Church.

Now fast-forward fifty-five years to 1825. Half a million-people have gathered in Rome for the great Jubilee celebration. The Jubilee occurs every 25 years, and its grand climax is the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica. Traditionally, the Pope knocks on the door three times with a large silver hammer and sings, "Open unto me the gates of justice!" On the third knock, the door swings open, and the Pope leads his people through. The symbolism is rich: pilgrims from all over the world coming back home to the Church, follow their leader through the great *porta fidei*, the "door of Faith." In the 1825 Jubilee year, in front of thousands of pilgrims, Cardinal Della Genga made his way to the door.

It was fifty-five years after the candlestick incident. Cardinal Della Genga, now Pope Leo XII neared the door. Turning to the Cardinal beside him—Cardinal Castiglioni, the Pope said, "Let me have the hammer." With a sly grin, Castiglioni replied, "Just like I gave you the candlestick?"

Amazingly, four years later Castiglioni succeeded his friend and became Pope, taking the name Pius VIII. — Now if you had told any of those pew sitters back in 1770 that they had two future-Popes in the back of their church, they'd have laughed you out of the building: "Those two boys? The ones shoving and whacking each other with candlesticks?" — Today's Gospel gives us the good news that God can change even "weeds" to wheat and that we should be patient. (Rev Greg Willits quoted by Fr. Tony Kayala in his blog). (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

Worst Enemies

Often God's worst enemies are friends! An editorial by Bill McNabb in *The Door* some years ago briefly elaborated on this idea: I had an old seminary professor who began and ended his apologetics lecture with one sentence: "You defend God like you defend a lion -- you get out of his way." God, it seems, has never had much trouble with his enemies -- it's his friends who give him fits.

The theologian Karl Rahner put it this way: "The number one cause of atheism is Christians. Those who proclaim God with their mouths and deny Him with their lifestyles is what an unbelieving world finds simply unbelievable." Perhaps the best defense of God would be to just **keep our mouths shut and live like He told us to**. The gospel would then have such power and attraction that we wouldn't have to worry about defending it. by Bill McNabb

"Your Excellency, your cabin-mate left his valuables with me for the same reason!"
A Bishop was sailing for Europe on one of the great transatlantic ocean liners. When he went on board, he found that another passenger was to share a cabin with him. After unpacking his bags, he went to the purser and inquired if he could leave his gold watch and other valuables in the ship's safe. He explained that he had just met the man who was to occupy the other berth in his cabin and he was afraid that the man might not be trustworthy. The purser smiled, accepted the valuables and remarked, "It's all right, Bishop, I'll be very glad to take care of them for you. The other man has just been up here and left his valuables for the same reason!" — Today's Gospel reminds us that we should not judge others hastily. There is a lot of good in the worst of us and a lot of evil in the best of us. In other words, the best of us are still "weeds" in God's garden. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

"Weeds" among dogs:

An instructor in a dog training workshop in Salt Lake City noted that a dog's disposition can be tested by the owner. If the owner will fall down and pretend to be hurt, a dog with a bad temper will tend to bite him. But a good dog will show concern and may lick the fallen owner's face. Susan Matice attended the class and then decided to test her two dogs. While eating pizza in her living room, she stood up, clutched her heart, screamed and fell to the floor. Her two dogs looked at her, looked at each other, then raced to the coffee table for her pizza. [Associated Press (1-17-91). Cited in Edward K. Rowell, *Humor for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).] (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).