

FR ALAN'S REFLECTION

A MIXTURE

Several years ago, when I was studying for a Masters in Ministry of Theology I wrote an essay entitled "God Mediates Salvation Through Broken Humanity." This essay centred on the book "Schindlers List" by Thomas Keneally. More particularly the focus was on the main character in the book, Oskar Schindler. "Schindlers List" tells the story of Oskar Schindler. He was a Catholic in name only. He was unfaithful to his wife many times over. He was a member of the Nazi Party. He was determined to come to the end of the war with trunks of money. He was an exploiter of Jews as cheap labour in his factory. As the war dragged on, he became increasingly sickened by Hitler's "final solution." He courageously protected his workers from the concentration camps at considerable risk to himself. By the end of the war it was estimated that he had saved the lives of about 1100 Jews. He was twice imprisoned by the Nazis. In the end he was eventually captured by the Russians and never heard of again. It raised the question was Oskar Schindler a good or an evil person?

In this Sunday's Gospel Jesus continues the Parable of the Sower and the Seed. This time he speaks about a farmer who planted seedlings but in the middle of the night the enemy came and planted weeds. It is almost impossible to tell which from which until they are fully grown. This parable suggests that good and evil are intertwined, and it is hard if not impossible to distinguish one from the other. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, 'In everyone the weeds of sin will still be mixed in with the good wheat of the Gospel.'

Whenever we encounter humanity in our neighbourhood, in the workplace, in the parish, in the family and in ourselves we discover a mixture of good and bad, truth and falsehood, , humility and pride, saintliness and sinfulness, graciousness and crudity, purity and lasciviousness, honesty and hypocrisy, justice and fraud, faith and doubt. This is the point of the Parable. There is a mixture of these things in us all. William Shakespeare in his play "All Is Well That Ends Well" said, 'The wells of our life is of a mingled form, good and ill together.'

In today's Gospel Jesus illustrates that the good farmer is patient. This is how God is with us. He gives us a chance to change. He is patient enough to see good and evil grow together. We are reminded that passing judgment on people is something only God should do.

While we await God's judgment this Gospel challenges us to look at the thoughts and movements of our hearts. In other words, we need to become more aware of those thoughts and intentions of our heart that lead us towards God and those thoughts that lead us away from him. Which thoughts bring us joy, peace, love, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, an increase of faith, hope, and love? But then what are the thoughts that leave us with envy, anger, impatience, sarcasm, self-indulgence, and infidelity? We all struggle with good and evil. What will dominate us is what we ultimately allow to be planted within us.

Let us resolve this week to grow spiritually. Let us allow God to show us how we can strengthen our relationship with him. Let us pray in the words of today's Second Reading for the Spirit to help us in our weakness.