

Homily for October 31, 2017

I love making pizza. For all of those delicious ingredients, cheeses, tomato sauce, sausages, onions, peppers and whatever other toppings you can imagine, to be enjoyed, they need to have a base, the pizza crust. A crust that has about 3 and a half cups of flour, and only on tablespoon of yeast. But as that yeast begins to ferment in the water, its presence bubbles and spreads. That is until you had the floor. As it permeates the flour, it can no longer be visibly seen but its presence is obvious, as the dough begins to rise over the next couple of hours and the scent of yeast meets your nostrils upon entering the kitchen.

I like that Jesus uses something as simple as yeast to talk about the kingdom of heaven. This is what we have seen over time. The yeast of the kingdom was kneaded into the dough of the early Church, which has continued to permeate the life of the community of Jesus Christ ever since. We can say that Jesus and the Apostles were like the yeast. Although physically no longer visible to us their presence is everywhere evident. Just as there would be no dough without the yeast there would be no Church without Jesus and the Apostles.

When we think about the yeast, it influences every molecule of the dough. When we think of the Church, the same holds true. Everything we profess today, has grown and expanded because of the yeast of the apostolic period. There is something at the very essence of what it means to be the Church that is organic, like yeast and flour. As it is cared for it grows over time.

The organic nature of the Church is a theme that is also emphasized in the first image Jesus uses, when describing the Kingdom of Heaven being like a mustard seed. Although the smallest of seeds, when it germinates and begins to grow it becomes a tree where birds can build their nests. Such has been the experience of those who follow Jesus. The apostolic band was made up of twelve men. From the small beginning the Church has grown to now be like this tree. Why do birds build nests? So that new life can be cared for until the chicks are ready to venture out into the larger world. It also provides a home for the birds.

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed tree because the Church is the fellowship where nests can be built for people to be nurtured and have a home until that day when we will fly free to our heavenly home. The Apostles are the ones Jesus entrusted with the message that we too preach to nurture and care for those being made ready for that heavenly flight. And of course, prior to that flight there are many flights to be made in this world.

May we give thanks to Jesus that His Church has grown and expanded organically over 2000 years so that today people the world over can make nests in its trees and be nurtured with such rich and nutrient food, thus allowing us to take flight in this world.