



July 10, 2011

Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

"One day a farmer went out sowing...some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."
Matthew 13: 4 & 8

Dear Friends;

The July issue of *National Geographic* featured an article entitled *Food Ark*. It points to a growing concern for the extinction of food varieties. It is happening all over the world from livestock to produce. For example in the United States, it is estimated that 90 percent of our historic fruit and vegetable varieties have vanished. "Of the 7,000 apple varieties that were grown in the 1800's fewer than 100 remain."

This is a problem. If disease or other climatic variables negatively impact the few varieties we still produce it could prove to be disastrous—diseased plants, no alternatives then famine. The Great Potato Famine in 19th century Ireland shows us what can happen when people rely on only one food source. The potatoes became blighted there was no alternative and millions starved.

The varieties of food stocks we have were developed over 10,000 years of human agriculture. Their loss is incalculable. Fortunately, there are efforts such as a seed exchange in Iowa, and the work of conservationist, Cary Fowler, who founded the *Global Seed Vault* to prevent the complete extinction of our crop diversity.

Another threat to the biodiversity of our food stocks is the economic process of globalization. There are fewer and fewer sources for seeds. Many of these sources bioengineer their seeds so that the plants they produce are sterile. That means that the plants produce no seeds. In this way the farmer is forced to continually purchase seed from the multinational company.

This has been oppressive for farmers in the underdeveloped countries. These allow some of their crops to go to seed each year, so they can plant for the following year. They only buy seed when they have a bad year. Many of these subsistence farmers cannot afford to buy more seed each year. We should not allow corporations to control the very staff of life.

Last week, I spoke of the oppressiveness of empire, i.e. the forces that control the world. No where is there any as oppressed as the natural world! Empire is manifest in the need to dominate, control, order, standardize, consume, endless market growth. Anything which does not fit the imperial order is driven out of existence.

Fast food, for example, is the result of an imperial worldview. The need to supply the fast food corporate world with products that are standardized greatly impacts our food diversity. The desire to have the same French fries everywhere prevents other types of crops from being grown. And like 19th Century Ireland we are one blight away from starving. The imperial force of globalization is threatening the created world and our future survival.

Jesus poses an alternative to empire. We can enter the reign of God and embrace the rich diversity of God's creation. We can enter this reign by already acting as citizens of the Kingdom—to act on behalf of those who have no voice: the disenfranchised, the creatures of our planet and the plant world.

We need to support efforts that promote and preserve biodiversity. Financially support efforts to conserve the natural world. Limit or eliminate trips to the fast food "restaurant." Support restaurants that use healthy, local grown food. Buy local produce as much as you are able. Learn to cook using seasonally available produce. Learn to cultivate a broad palate—learn to appreciate a wide variety of foods. Cut back on the amount of meat you eat (mega poultry, mega cattle ranches etc. contribute to ecological crisis.) Plant a vegetable garden in place of a lawn, fruit trees in place of the merely decorative. Teach children from where food comes. Live more simply, consume less. Become rich soil that promotes life in all its diverse abundance. Resist empire, enter the Reign of God and produce a harvest of life a hundredfold!

Peace,

Fr Ron