

A 16ot Homily
Matthew 13:24-33
July 16-17, 2011

There is a story about a little guy named Larry who played baseball with his friends in the twenty-five foot wide yard between his house and the one next door. The very first pitch of the season was hit by Larry down the third base line directly toward the house belonging to Mrs. G. The baseball went into and through Mrs. G's dining room window. It did not break the outer window, but the storm window fell quickly to pieces. Little Larry thought for sure that season was going to be a short one, just one pitch long.

Mrs. G appeared behind her inner window seemingly not injured and Little Larry thought his life was going to be a short one, too. She opened her window and invited Little Larry, his two teammates, and the three members of the other team into her house. The five boys other than Little Larry were ready for punishment. Little Larry was not.

Mrs. G patted five of the boys on the head as they were led by her to the living room. When Little Larry arrived, what did she do? She put both of her hands on his shoulders and smiled. That's all she did. She smiled and held him for the longest time, maybe it was actually five seconds, but it seemed so much longer. The rest of the story is predictable enough. Sure, it would cost money to fix the window. But it could be worked out. Little Larry says these days he doesn't remember much more about it than Mrs. G's serene smile and the silence of soft forgiveness.

Larry compares the experience to today's Gospel from Matthew. Remember how Jesus spoke of comparisons for the growing of God's Kingdom, using wheat, weeds, mustard seeds, and yeast as comparisons? The smile and the silence demonstrated by Mrs. G were mustard seeds and yeast for the growing awareness of what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. We live that Kingdom in the ways we allow the wheat of God's grace to outgrow the weeds of fear and hard punishing. That window was soon repaired and through it now Larry sees a face of God, softly smiling when he breaks something anew.

We will conclude our Festival this (Sunday) evening. Some conflict of some kind or another during the Festival usually challenges us to remember the kind of forgiveness God calls us to receive and to give. There are plenty of opportunities to smile, to fix things, to speak soft words of forgiveness with the help of God's grace, yes, to try to start anew.

And by the way – the story of Little Larry focuses on a man presently known as Father Larry Gillick, a member of the Jesuit (Society of Jesus) order. He wrote the story based on a childhood experience of his own. You can read his columns at the web site for the Deglman Center for Ignatian Spirituality. They are refreshing!

In my Pastor's Column in today's bulletin, I give you information concerning how to access Sunday reflections by Father Larry Gillick, S.J..

You didn't think Father Larry Frient broke that window, did you? No, not that one! I usually didn't drive baseballs down the left field line.