

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time.
July 26 & 27, 2014

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A Wise Household

My Dear Brothers and Sisters, I was wondering about the meaning of the last sentence in today's Gospel: Every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his store room both the new and the old.

There is so much dissociation and controversy between the conservatives and the progressives. The conservatives bring out of their store room the old, and the progressives bring forth the new. Both are important. Otherwise we become dysfunctional. And being dysfunctional results in loss of credibility, and loss of credibility damages the most precious gift of faith. Some conservatives try to respond to present needs with past knowledge, as if the world would be static, unchanging. On the other hand, some progressives respond to present needs with present knowledge, and forget the wisdom of the past. What is the wisdom of the past? To love and respect human life. But this love and respect today recognizes the relationship between our well being and the fact that our resources are not unlimited. The only way to remain sustainable is to establish a balance between our numbers, and our ways of life, and the Earth, knowing that it is the Earth's resources that support all life.

I cannot think of anything better to illustrate the meaning of a wise household than the second Vatican council, where it was clearly recognized that past wisdom without present knowledge is dysfunctional. So the council opened the windows of the church, and without forgetting the wisdom of the past, made a brave attempt to respond to present needs with present knowledge. In the section on *The Church Today*, in §62 we find this powerful statement: *Let it be recognized that all the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence.*

Kate Raworth, a senior researcher at Oxfam, and a teacher at Oxford University, sums up well the task what it means in our time to be a wise head of a household. In chapter 3 of the report: State of the World 2013, published by the Worldwatch Institute she writes: "Defining a safe and just space for humanity we have two boundaries: a ceiling and a floor. The ceiling is ecological, the floor is social. We should not go beyond either of these. If we do we are on no man's land, and create damage over which we have no more control. We should not go beyond our ecological limits, or disregard basic social and economic justice. We have already overstepped three out of nine ecological limits. These are a huge loss of biodiversity, climate change, and damage to the natural nitrogen cycle. As to the social foundation we have caused much human misery by disregarding such basic human needs, as our need for food, clean water, shelter, education, health-care, jobs, and many forms of social and gender equity."

As to real solutions we should remember that the human mind is often lazy, and likes to look upon things in one less dimension than they really are. We make a two dimensional drawing of a three dimensional world. We make a snapshot of an ongoing event. We consider an up-curving exponential growth as if it were an arithmetic straight line. And we look upon our world as if it were static, when actually it is in the process of an unfolding creation. Let us keep in mind our love and respect for life including our own, as we respond to present needs with present knowledge. Our time to respond is getting shorter.

Amen.