



FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

July 7, 2024

St. James Catholic Church

*3909 Harrison * Kansas City, Missouri 64110*

"Small enough to know your name, big enough to make a difference."

Reflection from Fr. Garry Richmeier

"We are a mess." Many people would agree with that statement. Whether "we" means us as individuals, as a society, as a church, as a country, as a world, or as a species. Chaos seems to be everywhere, and it is messy. Some would say that this mess is a sign that the end is near. Evangelicals describe this "end" beginning with the rapture and winding up with the last judgment. Other not-so-religiously-minded people describe this end as the result of a human compulsion for self-destruction, much like lemmings following each other in jumping off a cliff. Human ingenuity in creating ever new ways to inflict mass destruction, and widespread willful neglect of the planet that gives us life, are a couple of things that seem to support this view.

But there is another way to put meaning to the "mess." Jesus describes the world's mess in Mt. 24 as "birth pangs," by which he meant that new life would emerge from the mess. I have never been pregnant, but anyone who has can attest to the chaos and messiness that precedes new life being born. Martin Luther King Jr. seemed to be saying something about the mess he was involved in when he said "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." He could see the messiness of the civil rights movement as a (required?) precursor to a more just society eventually. We've all experienced the initial messiness of acquiring a new skill, or venturing into some other new territory. But with time and experience, finding fulfillment and enjoyment where there once was only messiness and struggle.

The meaning we choose to place on life's messiness is an important choice. If we see the messiness as needless suffering, leading to the "end," we have little reason to go on, or try to make things better. However, if we see the present messiness as a stage in the process of a new creation coming into existence, we are more apt to participate as midwives in helping to give birth to the new reality. This, I think, is what Jesus meant when he told his followers to look forward to the coming of the Reign of God, but that the Reign of God was already within them.