

Sixteenth Sunday of the Year – July 19, 2020

Wisdom 12: 13, 16-19 – Romans 8: 26-27 – Matthew 13: 24-30

Along with the parish maintenance personnel, I join in appreciation for the encouraging comments made about the appearance of the parish grounds. For myself, I see working on the property as a type of parable in itself. God has given us the beauty of creation. We work with that creation in a way to enhance this little part of it that we have been given. This is a reminder of the idea that we work in union with God to do the best that we can with the possibilities given to beautify the gift of life we have all received.

As to the particular parable we heard from Jesus today, I have to admit that my immediate reaction would be to side with the workers who wanted to tear out the weeds that had appeared. They wanted to do it immediately. But we can gain deeper insight into the lesson Jesus is proposing when the thoughts found in the reading from the Book of Wisdom are considered. That message to us is about God's actions on our behalf.

We all realize that in the course of our lives weeds appear along the way. We fail, we distance ourselves from God in various ways. Rather than immediately being condemned for such failures, our loving God patiently waits for us to grow and mature. Like wheat that grows to be ready for a bountiful harvest. The weeds will be eliminated, and discarded at that point.

So, we know that weeds know that weeds are present in our lives, what can we learn from them? First, that our lives are journeys. We still have work to do to realize the potential that is there if we truly wish to reflect godliness in our lives. Second, the Spirit of God, as St. Paul tells us, is with us. We are not alone in the journey of our lives. We can live in a partnership with our loving God. We can work with the Spirit of God to overcome barriers, to remove obstacle that we so often set up in our relationship with God, with others, and even with ourselves.

Weeds represent the continual struggles we have with ourselves. But they also point to the loving mercy of God that is available to us. In a prayer on the most solemn night of the Church's year, the Easter Vigil, the following words are heard: "O felix culpa," "O happy fault." A humble acknowledgment of our failures gained for us a closer enduring relationship with God in the redeeming life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In a particular way this is brought home to us in our Catholic faith in the beauty of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Confession. The celebration of the Sacrament is a specific opportunity to confront ourselves with our failures and to be reassured by another of the love and mercy of our God. In our lives and in the life of the Church that we are, weeds are present. But, more importantly, we are sacramentally assured in our Faith of the trust we have in the mercy and forgiveness of our good and gracious God.