



## Bible Study - 16th Sunday of Ordinary Time A

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“Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, ‘First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.’” Matt. 13:30 NABRE.

### Reading I: Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

**Growing Wheat or Killing Weeds!** One trip to the lawn and garden section of a “big box” home improvement store will demonstrate that there is a great interest in killing weeds. Some of the advertisements convince us that weeds are evil and must be destroyed. Among the weed killing products are those that are guaranteed to kill the weed on contact and those that will destroy the plant roots, as well. Yet, none can prevent the resurrection of the pesky, ever present, weed.

As Christians, we spend a lot of time removing evil strong holds, that is, the weeds in our lives. Perhaps we should spend more time developing our spiritual virtues. These spiritual qualities will eventually overcome the evil strongholds. In other words, we should be more concerned about growing



... Collect the  
wheat... burns  
the weeds.

our wheat, the spiritual virtues, than about killing our weeds. The weeds will be there until the end.

The first reading shows that Yahweh spends more effort on growing a relationship with Israel – the wheat- than destroying the enemies of Israel – the weeds. The authorship of the Book of Wisdom is attributed to a Greek-speaking Jew, probably in Alexandria, Egypt around the first century B.C.E. In the earlier chapters (9:1-10:15), the author demonstrates the loyalty of Yahweh. Later in Chapter 12, he presents a contrast between two of the attributes of God, His power and His forgiveness (vv. 13-19). Power in the hands of men seems a corrupting force. As John Dalberg- Acton says, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” God dispenses power with patience, forgiveness, and slow retribution. Verses 5-8 show how God even spared cannibals and those who offered child sacrifices as assurance of His mercy to Israel. By these merciful acts, Israel would be assured of forgiveness of their sins. (v. 19) Yahweh spent more time growing wheat – Israel - than killing weeds – Israel’s transgressors. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Why does good and evil exist alongside of each other?

### EVIL

Evil can be defined as a force that opposes God and His work of righteousness in the world (Rom 7:8-19). The word is also used for any disturbance to the harmonious order of the universe, such as disease (Ps 41:8). But the Bible makes it plain that even these so-called “physical evils” are the result of a far more serious moral and spiritual evil that began with the FALL of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3).

The ultimate source of evil in the world is Satan, also called “the devil” (Luke 8:12) and “the wicked one” (Matt 13:19). The Christian believer can rest assured that Jesus will triumph at the end of time, when Satan will be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone and evil will be overcome (Rev 20:10).

Evil also comes from the hearts of men (Mark 7:20-23). It does not come from God, “for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone” (James 1:13).

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### Reading II: Romans 8:26-27

**Growing Wheat or Killing Weeds!** In Chapter 8:18-27, St. Paul reminded the Romans that the evil and suffering in this world is nothing compared to the glory in Christ Jesus that is their destiny. Suffering, the weeds of life, will always be there, so they must grow in the hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ, which is the wheat of life. This life of hope builds endurance and ensures salvation. He encourages them to use prayer, patience and hope to reach their destiny, which is eternity with Jesus Christ.

Concentrating on difficulties and persecutions will lead to despair. One of the weeds or weaknesses is the inability to articulate our needs in prayer. St. Paul says don’t worry about how to pray, just pray. As a gift from Baptism, the Holy Spirit helps us with our prayer, because we don’t know how to pray, or what to pray for (v. 28). St. Paul includes himself in this verse. See 2 Cor. 12:8. He assures the Romans and us that nothing is hidden from God and the prayers that conform to God’s purpose will be answered (v. 28). We should not worry about the evil around us – the weeds. We should grow our wheat – our prayer life and our relationship with God. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Is there a relationship between prayer and hope?

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### Gospel: Matthew 13:24-43

**Growing Wheat or Killing Weeds!** It is a good thing that God does not spend time killing the weeds – evil- in His Kingdom. He chooses to nourish the wheat instead. That is, He considers all of us to be wheat - good, until we turn into weeds - evil.

The topic of discipleship is discussed by Jesus in the form of parables for a second consecutive Sunday. In doing so, Jesus gives His disciples hope so that they and we might imitate His kindness and justice (**Wis. 12:19**). The long form of the Gospel contains three parables. As disciples, we are constantly assessing our progress. We look for the "*Blessed Assurance*" that our conduct is acceptable to God. In the parables, Jesus gives us that "Blessed Assurance." He assures that God's wisdom and mercy allows for justice, even though evil exists alongside of good.

First, in the "*Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds*," Jesus teaches that His disciples must live with opposition. Evil doers will try to obstruct our journey to heaven (**v. 25**). Though the wheat must fight for life, it will bear fruit. He assures us that if we persevere, we will reach our destination – eternal life. The explanation of the parable of the weeds (**vv 36-43**) shows that evil will exist along side of good until the end of time. Sometimes, evil seems to thrive among the good, but we are assured that in the end, our faithfulness will be rewarded.

Second, in the "*Parable of the Mustard Seed*" (**vv. 31-32**) Jesus builds on the previous parable and stresses that despite the enemy's opposition, the harvest will be magnificent. From a small band of people in a dusty place called Palestine, came the Redeemer of the World whose first disciples are estimated to be from 12 to 5,000. Today it is estimated that there are over 1.2 billion baptized Catholics and 2.1 billion baptized Christians.

Third, the "*Parable of the Yeast*" continues the theme of assurance that small beginnings will yield a great result. The quality of yeast is not its size, but its power to change its environment. It is the same with us as Disciples of Christ. With the power of the Holy Spirit, the teachings of the Church, and the support of other disciples, we will endure. The reference to Psalm 78 shows that the parables of Jesus are in accord with the will of God. Jesus is the one who brings the Kingdom of God to earth. God sees the world as all wheat; that is why he does not kill the weeds. **DISCUSSION**

**QUESTIONS:** How do you react to opposition to your faith in Jesus Christ? Who are the "weeds" in your life? How do you treat them?

### Pray About It!

#### Monday

Read Matthew 13:24-30. Have you sowed weeds in someone's field?

#### Tuesday

Find ways to be just, kind, and slow to anger."

#### Wednesday

Read Wisdom 12:19. Pray for the strength to live among the "weeds" in your life.

#### Thursday

Pray for the leaders of our nation.

#### Friday

Forgive someone who has offended you.

### The Catholic Catechism

#### What? - Wheat and Weeds in the Church?

827 "Christ, 'holy, innocent, and undefiled,' knew nothing of sin, but came only to expiate the sins of the people. The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal." All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners. In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time. Hence the Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness ..."

1425 "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." One must appreciate the magnitude of the gift God has given us in the sacraments of Christian initiation in order to grasp the degree to which sin is excluded for him who has "put on Christ." But the apostle John also says: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." And the Lord himself taught us to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses," linking our forgiveness of one another's offenses to the forgiveness of our sins that God will grant us.

**Resources:** *The Gospel According to Matthew, Introduction to the New Testament*, Raymond E. Brown S.S. Doubleday New York, Ny. p. 186-187; *Romans*, John J. Pilch ; Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p. 1088-1090; *Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year A 2017*, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.ND. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 176-179; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner; <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism>; "Vatican statistics report church growth remains steady worldwide". *National Catholic Reporter*. 2 May 2014. Retrieved 30 May 2014.

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St. Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2017