



FAITH CIRCLES

WEEKLY SMALL GROUP CATECHESIS

16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A

SUNDAY GOSPEL

The Problem of Good & Evil

Matthew 13:24-43

Jesus put a parable before the crowds, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off. When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. The owner’s servants went to him and said, ‘Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?’ ‘Some enemy has done this’ he answered. And the servants said, ‘Do you want us to go and weed it out?’ But he said, ‘No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers:



First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn.”

Then, leaving the crowds, he went to the house; and his disciples came to him and said, “Explain the parable about the darnel in the field to us.” He said in reply, “The sower of the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world; the good seed is the subjects of the kingdom; the darnel, the subjects of the evil one; the enemy who sowed them, the devil; the harvest is the end

of the world; the reapers are the angels. Well then, just as the darnel is gathered up and burnt in the fire, so it will be at the end of time. The Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that provoke offences and all who do evil, and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. Then the virtuous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Listen, anyone who has ears!” ■

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Fr Gerard Moran OCD



The kingdom, the reign of God, is manifest in what Wordsworth describes beautifully as “the little acts of kindness and of love” that light up the “everyday”, done in response to Jesus’ word. These stand out among what the

letter to the Hebrews calls the “dead actions” that can often characterise our daily lives; they are like wheat amidst the darnel; “like bright stars in the world”. They are so small, hidden and seemingly insignificant that they will never be recorded or remembered, but they form a “world-wide web” of goodness, a realm where justice, peace and love break in. In August of 1942 during the deep darkness of Nazi occupied Europe, the Carmelite saint, Edith Stein, washed little children and

combed their hair in a transit camp for Auschwitz.

These gestures of love and hope, though small, grow strongly like the mustard seed and provide a space where hungry and tired spirits can find rest and nourishment to continue their journey. They leaven and raise the spirit of a family, a community, a parish and a workplace. This is the reign of God! The words of Jesus have taken root in the rich soil of a generous and converted heart and bring forth a “new creation”. ■

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS



This Sunday, the liturgy gives us the parable of *the good grain and the weed*, which deals with *the problem of evil* in the world

and calls attention to *God's patience*.

The teaching of the parable is twofold. First of all, it tells that the evil in the world *comes not from God, but from his enemy, the evil one*. It is curious that the evil one goes at night to sow weed, in the dark, in confusion; he goes where there is no light, to sow weed. This enemy is astute: he sows evil in the middle of good, thus it is impossible for us to distinctly separate them; but God, in the end, will be able to do so.

And here we arrive at the second theme: the juxtaposition of the impatience of the servants and the *patient waiting* of the field

owner, who represents God. At times, we are in a great hurry to judge, to categorise, to put the good here, the bad there ... But remember the prayer of that self-righteous man, "God, I thank you that I am good, that I am not like other men, malicious" (cf Lk 18:11-12). God, however, knows how to wait. With patience and mercy he gazes into the "field" of life of every person; he sees much better than we do the filth and the evil, but he also sees the seeds of good and waits with trust for them to grow. God is patient, he knows how to wait. This is so beautiful: our God is a patient father, who always waits for us and waits with his heart in hand to welcome us, to forgive us. He always forgives us if we go to him.

The field owner's attitude is that of hope grounded in the certainty that evil does not have the first nor the last word. And it is thanks to

this *patient hope* of God that the same weed, which is the malicious heart with so many sins, in the end can become good grain. But be careful: evangelical patience is not indifference to evil; one must not confuse good and evil! In facing weeds in the world, the Lord's disciple is called to imitate the patience of God, to nourish hope with the support of indestructible trust in the final victory of good, that is, of God.

In the end, in fact, evil will be removed and eliminated: at the time of harvest, that is, of judgment. On the day of the final harvest, *the judge will be Jesus*, He who has sown good grain in the world and who himself became the "*grain of wheat*", who died and rose. In the end, we will all be judged by the same measure with which we have judged: *the mercy we have shown to others will also be shown to us*. ■

TALKING POINTS

1. We have more imagery of seed and sowers – this week, with "reaping" in the parable Jesus gives us. Fr Gerard Moran helps us to understand the Kingdom of God as "the reign of God" borne out in lives where the words of Jesus have taken root. What is the wheat in my life – that which serves God's kingdom? What is the darnell – that which needs to be removed?
2. Scriptural references to judgment make many feel uneasy. The phrase "God comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable" has been aptly used by theologians to describe how God engages with our hearts. How does the notion of final judgment make me feel in light of Pope Francis' assertion that, "We will all be judged by the same measure with which we have judged: the mercy we have shown to others will also be shown to us?"

PRAYER POINTS

Pray for Each Other: Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them

Response: *Lord we long to be your wheat, bearing grain one-hundred fold, for your Kingdom of mercy and love.*

Reflect: What area of your life needs to be broken open and exposed to the transforming love and mercy of God? How might I boldly show love and mercy to those in my life who I find most difficult or who have hurt me?

Closing Prayer: Lord, we love you and long to be drawn into the eternal harvest as your sons and daughters. Fill us with your grace and mercy and the power to be sources of this love and mercy for others. Amen.

