

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
Our Response to God's Gift of the Kingdom of God

Wisdom 12:13, 16–19; Psalm 86:5–6, 9–10, 15–16; Romans 8:26–27; Matthew 13:24–43

Dear brothers and sisters,

Happy 95th Parish Foundation Anniversary!

You may have noticed that the Church often prays for us to be freed from whatever holds us back and to be kept safe from distress. This prayer comes right after the Lord's Prayer and is called the "embolism," which means "insert":

"Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always be free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ."

Your response is: "For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever!"

For 95 years, our parish has prayed for the Kingdom of God to grow among us. We depend on God's saving grace to free us from sin and give us strength when life is difficult, in a world that has both weeds and wheat.

Jesus uses the parable of the wheat and the weeds to describe the Kingdom of God. In the story, a farmer plants good wheat, but at night, someone scatters weeds in the field. When the servants notice the weeds, they ask, "Master, should we pull them out?" Most of us would probably say, "Of course! Pull them out right away!" But the master surprises them by saying, "No. Let them grow together until the harvest."

This parable teaches us something about our own lives. We may not like the weeds, but they grow around us and even inside us, whether we notice them or not. It reveals what is in our hearts. There are good and bad citizens, hardworking and lazy workers, sensible and foolish teenagers, responsible and neglectful parents, honest and corrupt politicians, and many others.

Let's reflect on the three lessons we can draw from this parable in the spirit of the "little way" of our Patron, St. Therese of the Child Jesus.

First, before we point out what others do wrong, we should look at our own faults. It's always easier to see other people's mistakes than to notice our own. We might quickly spot a coworker's laziness, a neighbor's gossip, someone else's pride or mistakes, or even the distractions of someone in front of us at Mass. But we often overlook our own impatience, pride, dishonesty, selfishness, or lack of prayer.

Jesus shows us that every heart contains both good and bad. We can be kind, but also selfish. We have faith, yet sometimes we are afraid. We can be generous, but also proud. Being a Christian doesn't mean pretending we have no faults. It means letting Jesus help us grow and change, little by little. Every confession, every honest prayer, and every small act of kindness is a way God helps us remove another weed from our hearts.

Let's remember that the people who truly make a difference in the world are not those who judge others, but those who let God change them first.

Second, don't give up on people because God hasn't given up on them. In the parable, the servants wanted to judge quickly, but God chose patience and love. How often have we thought, "He'll never change," "She's hopeless," or "That family can't be helped"? Only God knows what someone can become. Think of St. Peter, who denied Jesus three times; St. Paul, who once persecuted Christians; or St. Augustine, who spent years away from God. If God had given up on them, we wouldn't know them as saints today.

Perhaps someone in your family has stopped praying, left the Church, or is struggling with bad habits. Don't stop loving them. Don't stop praying for them. As long as they are alive, there is hope. God is still working in hearts we cannot see. We see this in the life of our patron, St. Therese. Just days before her death, she promised, "I will spend my heaven doing good on earth." She also said she would "let fall a shower of roses" to help souls. Her example teaches us not to give up on people easily.

Finally, be patient, because God often works slowly. We live in a world where everything is instant, from coffee and noodles to messages, deliveries, and even relationships. Sometimes we want instant holiness and expect miracles right away. We might go to confession once and hope never to be tempted again. But God usually works more like a farmer than a magician. A farmer plants, waters, waits, and trusts. Growth takes time, and roots develop before fruit appears.

Maybe today you are praying for your family, working to save your marriage, striving to be a better spouse, or working to break a bad habit. Don't be discouraged if you don't see results yet. God is still working. His timing is always better than ours. St. Therese reminds us of the importance of patience. She said, "If I did not simply live from one moment to another, it would be impossible for me to be patient; but I only look at the present, I forget the past, and I take good care not to forestall the future."

So today, let's ask the Lord for three graces and strive to live them out. First, the grace of humility to remove the weeds from our hearts. Second, the grace of charity that never gives up on people. Finally, the grace of patience to trust that God is quietly growing good things in us, even when we can't yet see them.

St. Therese of the Child Jesus, pray for us!

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor