

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 19, 2026

Brothers and sisters, one of our professors bought in a little package of mustard seeds just to show us how tiny they actually are and then pictures of how big the bush can get. And actually, as I was preparing for this homily it made me think, you know, when people keep trying to go back to what Christ planted on Calvary, when he set the Church out that little mustard seed had grown. It's almost like they're trying to deny what naturally happens when you plant, water, and grow the seed. And that's what we have as this Church now.

However, the focus did become clear in Jesus' parable of the weed, and the wheat address the problem of sinners in the Church today. Now, I heard somebody give a response, someone was complaining, "You Catholics have sinners in your Church; therefore, you can't be the true church." And this person, a little quicker than I, said, "If you look at the members of your church and see only wheat, only the saints, then you are in the wrong place." We hear the Gospel today that Christ's church is going to have both weed and wheat in it until the end of time. The other thing is that if everybody's one hundred per cent correct than somebody's lying. But that's another homily.

I would like to talk about two views in the Church that have emerged from this passage. One is being exclusive, and the other is being inclusive. Over time these views have led some astray into two fundamental errors. First, trying to purge those who are deemed unworthy and second, confirming people in their sins. The exclusive viewpoint holds that the Church is

meant only for good people, and the presence of sinners in the Church is always a cause for scandal. Therefore, like the Pharisees attempted, these sinners should be ruthlessly rooted out, weeded out, importantly, for those adhering to an exclusive viewpoint, a saint in their eyes is anyone who looks and acts like they do. Here one is trying to make people in the image and likeness of oneself. Yes, a very bad idea.

As a reminder, Christ did not come to call the virtuous but the sinners, he sought them out, befriended them to bring them to repentance. Our Lord called them to a new way of life, and many responded by changing their lives. Paul, Peter, Mary, the apostles. You and me? Whereas an exclusive viewpoint holds that the Church must be open and accommodating to all. This view tends to deny hard truths to make Christianity more palpable for sinners. “If we were just nicer, people would come back.” Or “You are good, I am good, we are good as we are.” Or how about this one? “God made us this way. There is no need to change. And God loves you for who you are.” Or if my brother says, ‘you knew you, boo’ thereby ignoring the need for repentance and conversion of hearts. Yet Jesus' first words of public ministry were, *“The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.”*

Repent means to turn back towards God and belief is more than just mere acknowledgment. If we could just acknowledge that Jesus Christ's is the Savior and be done with it, or the demons would be okay then, they were acknowledging it.

Now, also, we hear Christ say to many people after healing them, *“Go, and sin no more.”* So, the Catholic viewpoint is this that the Church is open to all sinners. However, all are called to repent. All are called to turn away from our sins and turn back towards God, to stop sinning. And it's going to take a lifetime, and his grace is to do that. Christ meets us where we're at and brings us to where he's at. And that's a journey and a conversion.

Now, up to the last judgment, Holy Mother Church will be a mixed bag consisting of saints as well as sinners. Moreover, the Church is meant, the Church is the means through which sinners become saints. We are weeds who through God's graces are converted to wheat. The Church in the world is a Sacrament of Salvation, the sign and the instrument of communion with God and man. And in his patience, our Lord allowed both weeds and wheat to grow up together, both saints and sinners so that they have time to respond to his invitation, his invitation to repentance, and to accept his saving help. You saw my hands, brother and sisters. Each of us is like that field in the parable. We each have wheat and weed growing side by side in our hearts.

Now, I read a story about a man who spent years in his life in Stalin's labor camp, and he had this to say: “I learned one great lesson from many years in prison camp. I learned how a person becomes evil, and how he becomes good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either – but right through every human heart – and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one

small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of hearts, there remains ... an un-uprooted small corner of evil.”

While we are on this side of the beatific vision, we are being perfected. We are not perfect that requires us to ask God to show us what needs to be healed and ask for his help to do it.

Jesus also knew that people could change. The person might commit a grave sin and by responding to God’s graces the same person comes to repent and be redeemed. St. Paul is a good example of this. At one stage, he was a leader in the persecution of the early Church, present at the stoning of the first martyr, Stephen. And he was converted and went on to become one of the greatest champions of the Christian faith.

The best thing we can do is with God's grace, the help of the Holy Spirit, to take a look into the fields of our own heart. When we find some weeds, there is no doubt we will, we bring them to Jesus in a Sacrament of Confession. Apologize for them, ask for graces to become reconciled with his Church. Also, in prayer, we ask Christ to transform our weeds or purge them from the soil of our soul. Some sins are disordered good and can be reordered with our Lord's help. Whereas other sins are intrinsically evil, they are always evil and cannot be transformed. These sins need to be removed.

The main point of the parable is that up to the last judgment, the kingdom of God on earth, the Church, will be a mixed bag, consisting of saints and sinners. Just a reminder, every saint had a past. Every sinner has a future. Our future is in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who out of great love for us, meets us where

we are at, calls us to repentance, and with his help transform us into the wheat of his father.