

Wheat and Weeds

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) – Mt 13:24-30
July 23, 2023 – Ave Maria Parish – Fr. David M Vidal

Last Sunday, we listened as Jesus explained to us how the seed falls into the ground and produces fruit. We learned how important the good quality of the soil is because the rocky ground, the ground with thorns, and the regular pathway will prevent the growth of the seed.

In today's parable, Jesus compares us not with the soil but with the grain itself. He tells us that we are called to be wheat and not tare or weed. Let us try to understand the nature of each one.

What is the nature of the *tare*?

Tare is a harmful weed that resembles wheat when it is young. The word "tare" came to the English language by way of France. It stems from the Old Italian term "tara" which is itself a word that comes from the Arabic word "ṭarḥa" which means "that which is removed." According to this definition "tare" is an undesirable element that must be uprooted and burned.

Why? It is because a weed is a plant that interferes with the development of desirable plants. It is unusually persistent and malicious. It interferes by competing for light, water, and nutrients. It emerges before other desirable plants do and establishes a rapid growth. Obviously, it has a negative impact on the life of good seeds such as the wheat of the parable.

What is the nature of the *wheat*?

Wheat is a source of multiple nutrients. Wheat bread has been from antiquity a common meal and sometimes the only meal for the sustenance of the people. The grain of wheat not only sustains life but also communicates life since when it falls into the ground and dies, more wheat comes from it. For this reason, it is a desirable grain that is cultivated and protected.

Let us go back to the parable to try to understand its meaning:

First, the sowing of seed: Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to "a man who sowed good seed in his field." That man is also the Master, or the Owner of the field. Immediately, we discover in that image, the image of God, the Creator of heaven and earth. From Him, all good things come because everything that is good comes from Him. He created things good, and He sustains them in their goodness. Nothing evil comes from God.

Second, the appearance of tare: “Where have the weeds come from? . . . An enemy has done this.” The name of “enemy” refers to the “evil one.” The evil one is the devil, and he is the enemy of God because he decided “not to serve God.” That was his ruin and condemnation. Since then, he tries to undo God’s work, bringing to his own misery the whole of humanity, if it were possible. Therefore, he is the enemy of humanity, the instigator of every dissension. He sows discord, hate, and every kind of evil. His plan is to suffocate the little ones in their growth so that they do not produce fruit. His plan is for them to die, and to be burned.

When does this malicious action happen? The Lord warns us: “*When everyone was asleep the enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off.*” It is also a warning. The enemy does not rest. In the same way, the agents of darkness many times work harder and more swiftly than the children of light. They do this for their evil purposes, while the children of light take their rest.

Third, the request of the workers: “Let us remove the tare.” That is an obvious request. The tare must be removed because of the consequences they can bring to the little wheat spikes.

But the Owner of the field explains: “No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them.” We must remember that when young the *wheat* and the *tare* look alike. Then, good people could be removed together with evil people. God in his wisdom and mercy gives us time. The time to develop and grow, the time to repent and renew, the time to be what He calls us to be: a beautiful grain of wheat, full of life according to God’s plan. However, it does not mean that God does not care about the evil that is caused by the action of those who are evil.

Fourth, the answer of the Master and Owner of the field: “*Let us wait until harvest; then at harvest time, the weeds will be collected and tied in bundles for burning; but the wheat will be gathered into the barn.*”

It means that there will be a judgment. God is merciful, and He is just. This is the first truth that we learn in our catechism lessons: “*God is the Infinitely Perfect Being, Creator of heaven and earth, who rewards those who are good and punishes the evil ones.*”

Let us try to be wheat! In a letter to the Christians, Saint Ignatius of Antioch asked believers not to interfere with his sentence or seek his release when he was condemned to die in the Coliseum of Rome by being thrown to the lions. Then, Saint Ignatius said: “*I am the wheat of God and am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts that I may be found the pure bread of Christ.*” How beautiful it is to think of ourselves as the wheat of God! And how brave it is to accept the sacrifices of this life to become the Holy Bread of Jesus!

We also want to be like a pure host that is elevated in honor of God! Our Lord is a constant reminder of our vocation. He chose bread made of wheat for the miracle of the Eucharist, and from the Eucharist, He teaches us to live our holy vocation.

Let us work untiringly to remove from our lives any appearance of *tare*, the evil of discord, hate, and any kind of malice. Let us give a good example and leave the moment of judgment to God. He knows when it will be the proper time for the final harvest. Now, it is the time to be the wheat of God and become the holy bread of Christ. By doing so, we will be more like Jesus. Amen.