

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

GOSPEL

Jerusalem Bible © 1966 by Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday & Company Inc.

Jesus put another 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."

(Matthew 13:24-30)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Darnel is an annual grass commonly found in grain fields as a weed. When it first shoots it looks very much like wheat.
- There are echoes in this gospel of the final judgment, when the good will be separated from the bad, the sheep from the goats, the weeds from the harvest.
- The Jewish faith has a profound respect for the name of God, and the holy name is never pronounced or even written in full. The Gospel of Matthew is the most Jewish of the gospels and characteristically always refers to the 'kingdom of heaven' rather than the 'kingdom of God'.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The contrast between the good and bad seed reflects a reality within Matthew's community. This text highlights the difficulty of being a Church called to spread the Good News while there are some within its ranks who scandalise others by their bad behaviour or decadent way of life.

This parable counsels patience. The answer to the dilemma is to let both the righteous and the lawless members of the community grow together until the harvest time and then let God be the judge. Ultimately, this parable assures its hearers that God will not allow evil to destroy what is good.

In the longer version of this gospel, the short parables of the kingdom compare it to a mustard seed and to the yeast in dough. Both are small and insignificant, but both develop almost imperceptibly, and once begun, there is no stopping them.

- What small signs of the kingdom already present do we see in our world?
- What signs of the kingdom not yet present do we see in our world?
- What small signs of the kingdom already present do we see in ourselves?
- What signs of the kingdom not yet present do we see in ourselves?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Alexander Solzhenitsyn recalls, 'Gradually I came to realise that the line that separates good from evil passes not between nations, nor between classes of people, nor between political parties—but right through every human heart.' Do you agree with this estimation of where evil originates? If this is true, how can evil be confronted or challenged? Share your reflections.
- Identify some of the positive and negative aspects of your character or personality. How do you deal with the less attractive side of yourself?
- Identify some of the positive and negative aspects we see in our own society. How can we foster what is good and discourage what is not?
- We need to accept the imperfections in ourselves and in others to some extent. What do you have to be patient with in yourself? In others?
- This week, be tolerant of the limitations of others and try to rectify an imperfection in yourself.
- Say the Lord's Prayer slowly each day this week and reflect on ways you can help to build the kingdom:

Thy kingdom come on Earth as it is in heaven.

