

**Good is Stronger Than Evil**  
**16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**  
**(Mt 13:24-43)**

In the Parable of the Sower (last Sunday), Jesus teaches the need for good soil in order for the seed to grow and bear fruit. In the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, he teaches that even seed growing in good soil will face a challenge.

Many Catholic parents experience the pain and heartbreak of children who grow up only to leave the faith, or otherwise pursue a life at odds with the teaching of the Gospel. Despite strict and intense spiritual upbringing, with full religious instruction and moral discipline, there is no guarantee that the seeds planted will come to full fruition.

It is a time of self-examination: what did I do wrong? How did I fail? This examination is important, because we are imperfect instruments of God, continually in need of repentance and reformation. But even great saints, such as Elizabeth Ann Seton, experienced this “failure” with regard to some of their children, as did Jesus himself, with regard to Judas.

The fact is, as Jesus teaches in the parable, “an enemy has done this.” There is a deliberate, malicious, enemy who actively sabotages all the good efforts of the workers who serve in the field of the Lord. He has many opportunities, which he fully uses, to sow seeds of evil: falsehoods, sin, pride, self-will.

Parents discover, as did the farmer, that despite all the early efforts, weeds grow up along with the wheat. As children grow into maturity, they are exposed to other unwholesome and foreign influences, not the least of which is a sinful tendency from within their own nature. The devil sows destructive weeds, and the challenge for parents and grandparents only seems to increase with age.

The servants approach the master with the dilemma: should we try to pull up the weeds? But farmer says no, it will end up causing greater damage to the wheat. Evil doesn’t simply grow alongside good, it is parasitic, growing within and through the good. Try to stamp out all the evil, and you hamper the ability of the good to continue its work – much as we discover today when trying to stamp out a virus by shutting down the economy of life. The “cure” is worse than the illness.

Instead, Jesus says the evil must be endured and tolerated as a fact of life until the judgment. The focus of the farmer must be to strengthen, nourish, and promote the good, in the absolute trust and confidence that good will win out over evil in the end. The last day will reveal the good in all its glory and strength, stripped and freed from the weeds that seemed to overwhelm it.

As Jesus taught last week in the Parable of the Sower, it is so important to provide rich soil. Every priority must be given to laying a solid foundation of Catholic faith and life when the seedling is young, that it may sink deep roots, and be nourished with solid food. The greater strictness and shielding are needed when a child is young. But as a child grows older, parents will not have the same control over his environment, or his decisions. The task shifts to one of pruning, guiding, directing, encouraging, and strengthening. The farmer will stay fully involved and engaged with the plant as it grows toward harvest; the work never ceases. But overly strict discipline, isolation, and moral enforcement will cause more harm than good at this stage, and harm the relationship itself. It will no longer be possible to overcome all the weeds.

The greatest asset is the plant's roots. As long as parents continue, through prayer and admonition, to reinforce that foundation, there is hope. With time and age, the original foundation becomes more and more important.

The parable of the Wheat and Weeds is both a warning and encouragement. Jesus reminds us of the vicious enemy who constantly sows seeds of sin and division. Our work must take into account this opposition and interference. But Jesus also encourages us to have confidence in the resilience of the wheat, once planted in good soil. Good is greater than evil, and even when the plant seems to be completely smothered in sin while in the field, we might be surprised on the last day to see what actually endured.

Let us take encouragement from this Parable, and redouble our efforts to strengthen the faith in our children and grandchildren, despite the fact that in many cases there are things in their lives that are not right. Never give up, remind them of their roots, and know that in the end good will win over evil.