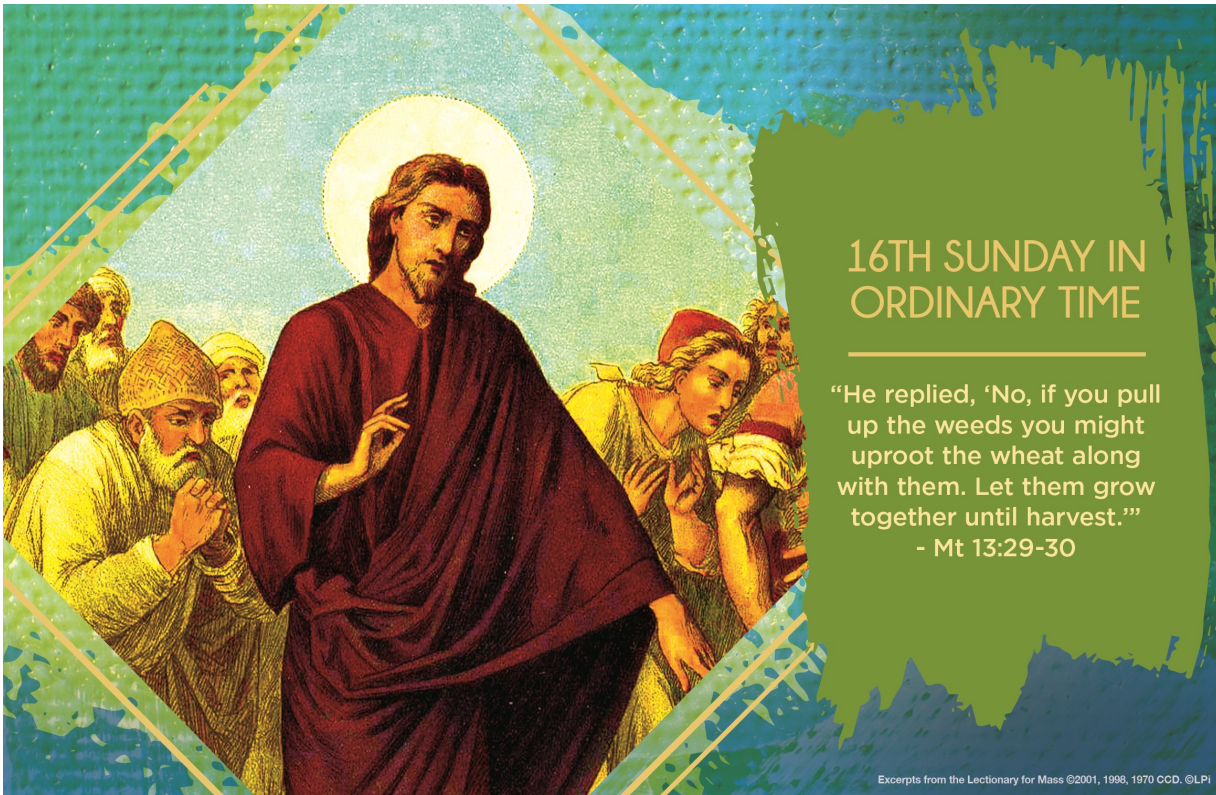




parish newsletter

23 July 2023 | Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Let them grow together until harvest time



16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

“He replied, ‘No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest.’”
- Mt 13:29-30

Fr John Muir

Patience is rooted in Hope (an image of a bush filled with birds would be great). Life, like the church, is often burdened with evil, smallness, and impurities. The Lord’s parables give us a hope-filled perspective on all three.

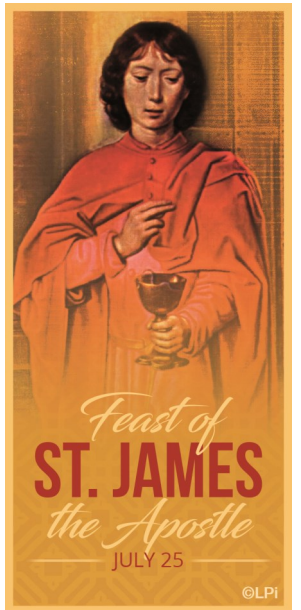
Evil: in Jesus’ parable about the good farmer whose enemy plants weeds at night, Jesus tells us that God is not the cause of evil but permits evil to exist with good out of his patient love. He *will* finally deal with it, but his love lets things stay messy for a time.

Smallness: It’s funny that Jesus says his kingdom looks like ... wait for it ... a bush. What a letdown! Yet this little shrub still somehow has room for all the birds of the

sky. The smallness of the Church, and even our own little lives, still provides plenty of room for all whom God sends.

Impurities: divisions and hypocrisies in the Church and our own hearts exasperate us. Recall that Jesus compares his kingdom to a lump of dough with impure leaven eating away at it and therefore making it expand. It’s the secret of the Cross. Not how we’d prefer it. But finally, great news.

The field, the bush, the loaf: all three parables invite us to embrace a patience rooted in hope: one day the field will be weeded, the bush filled with birds, and the risen loaf leaven-free.



Seeds of Wisdom: Nurturing Our Inner Gardens

The readings today encourage us to be like skilled gardeners tending to their plants, by learning how to cultivate our inner gardens to grow in wisdom, persevere in faith, and foster unity amidst diversity.

The Book of Wisdom reminds us that God’s wisdom is boundless and extends to both the righteous and the wicked. It challenges us to embrace the divine wisdom that seeks to transform our hearts. Wisdom teaches us to approach life’s challenges with compassion, patience, and understanding, recognizing the potential for growth and conversion in ourselves and others. By doing so, we foster an environment where mercy and

forgiveness flourish, nurturing harmonious relationships.

The psalmist’s heartfelt plea for God’s guidance reminds us of our inherent need for divine assistance. In our daily lives, we often encounter situations that require discernment and understanding. We can seek solace in the knowledge that God is always present, ready to provide wisdom and direction. By embracing humility and acknowledging our limitations, we open ourselves to receive God’s guidance and allow it to shape our thoughts, decisions, and interactions with others.

In the second reading, Saint Paul highlights the role of the Holy Spirit as our ad-

vocate and intercessor. He assures us that even in our moments of weakness and uncertainty, the Spirit comes to our aid, enabling us to communicate with God beyond the limitations of our words. Recognizing the Spirit’s presence, we are encouraged to surrender our anxieties, doubts, and fears, trusting that God understands the deepest longings of our hearts. This awareness empowers us to embrace vulnerability, authenticity, and reliance on God’s grace in our daily lives.

Jesus’ parable illuminates the coexistence of good and evil within the world and the ultimate triumph of God’s kingdom. Just as weeds grow alongside the wheat, we

encounter various challenges, struggles, and distractions in our lives. This parable encourages us to adopt a patient and discerning attitude, avoiding hasty judgments or attempts to uproot what we perceive as “weeds” in others. Instead, we are called to focus on cultivating the “wheat” within ourselves, nurturing virtues, and fostering an environment of love, compassion, and understanding.

The readings remind us to approach our relationships with compassion and understanding, recognizing the potential for growth and transformation in ourselves and others. In our interactions, let’s practice active listening, seeking to under-

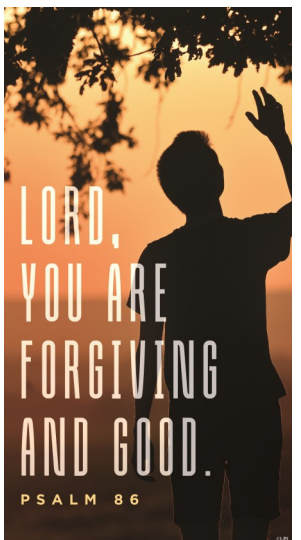
stand before being understood. This attitude helps nurture an atmosphere of open dialogue, where conflicts can be resolved, and bridges of understanding can be built.

Acknowledging our need for divine guidance, let us cultivate humility and seek God’s wisdom in our daily lives. In times of uncertainty or decision-making, let us pause, reflect, and invite God’s presence to illuminate our path. This practice fosters a sense of peace and confidence, knowing that we are not alone in our journey.

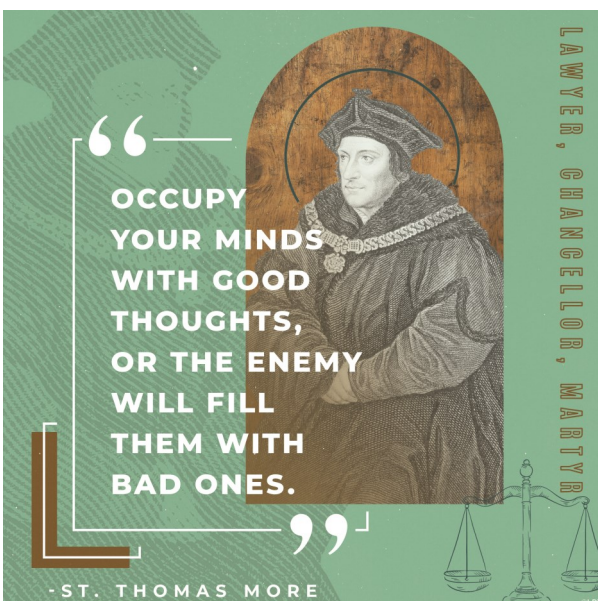
The parable of the weeds among the wheat teaches us to embrace diversity and avoid hasty judgments. In a world filled with differences,

let’s celebrate and learn from the varied perspectives, cultures, and beliefs around us, especially in our parish. By fostering an inclusive and respectful environment, we contribute to the growth of God’s kingdom on Earth.

The readings this week remind us of the beauty and challenges of life’s journey. Like skilled gardeners, we are called to cultivate our inner gardens, nurturing virtues such as wisdom, compassion, and understanding. By embracing divine guidance, trusting the Holy Spirit’s intercession, and fostering unity amidst diversity, we create an environment where God’s kingdom can flourish. May these readings inspire us to tend our inner gardens,



allowing the seeds of wisdom to grow, blossom, and bear fruit in our daily lives.



(Practising) Catholic

The Catholic Bubble

Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

There’s a dangerous myth that exists among pockets of faithful, observant Catholic families. I call it the Legend of the Catholic Bubble.

Here’s how the legend goes: you find a devout Catholic parish and a devout Catholic community filled with devout Catholic people who care about devout Catholic things, and you stay away from everything and everyone else, you and your children will be safe from the influence of the evil one. Your children will never fall away

from the faith, or even be tempted, and your own faith will stay steel-strong amidst the many tempests and trials of this earthly life.

But like the Loch Ness Monster and the Abominable Snowman, it’s all made up.

Don’t misunderstand me: I love a good devout Catholic parish. I live for a supportive, devout Catholic community. It’s one of the biggest blessings in the Christian life, and I cannot overstate how helpful it is to raise children in an environment that upholds your Catholic faith and does not denigrate it.

But. But.

Make no mistake: the Catholic Bubble will not save you. The trials and the temptations will find you there, too: on the parish council, at Catholic school, in your Catholic women’s group. No community on earth is so supportive that it mimics Heaven. The weeds have been sown with the good seed, and the harvest time is not yet upon us.

Cherish your community, certainly — but beware of the lure of the Catholic Bubble. We are called to be yeast in the loaf of bread, and yeast is nothing on its own.

“And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because

REPENT, THEN,
AND TURN TO GOD,
SO THAT YOUR SINS
MAY BE WIPED OUT.

ACTS 3:19

he intercedes for the holy ones according to God’s will.” — Romans 8:27

Live the Liturgy

When the disciples cannot understand something, they approach Jesus, and beseech him to explain. Let us be this forthcoming when we are discerning the will of God or struggling with a decision. Let us ask him to explain in words we can understand.



First Reading:
And you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind; and you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins. (Wis 12:19)

Psalm:
O Lord, you are good and forgiving. (Ps 86)

Second Reading:
The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. (Rom 8:26)

Gospel Acclamation
Alleluia, alleluia!
May the father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us.
Alleluia

Gospel:
“Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, ‘First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.’” (Mt 13:30)

22	Saturday	6.00 VIGIL MASS	St Cecilia's	Robert & Louise Wilson (RIP)
23	SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)	8.00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
		9.00 MASS	Oaklea Convent	Gerry Garraghan (RIP)
		10.00 MASS	St Mary's	Robert Wilson (RIP)
		5.00 MASS	St Mary's	People of the Parish
		6.30 Parish Pastoral Council	Upper Room	
24	The Martyrs of the Diocese	8.00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
		9.00 Student Morning Prayer	Upper Room	
		9.30 MASS	Oaklea Convent	Ints of Sr Josepha
		12.05 MASS	St Mary's	Private Intention (GSCC)
		12.45 Chaplet of Divine Mercy	St Mary's	
25	St James, Apostle	8.00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
		9.30 MASS	Oaklea Convent	Ints of Peter & Richard
		12.05 MASS	St Mary's	Mary L Youll (RIP)
		1.00 Over 60s	St Mary's Catholic Centre	
		4.30 Chaplaincy Tuesday	Upper Room	
26	Wednesday	8.00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
	Saint Joachim & St Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary	9.30 MASS	Oaklea Convent	
		12.05 MASS	St Mary's	Thanksgiving for recovery (KC)
27	Thursday	8.00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
		9.30 MASS	Oaklea Convent	
		10.00 Open House	St Mary's Catholic Centre	
		10.00 Confessions	St Cecilia's	Kevin & Cecilia Finn (RIP)
		10.30 MASS	St Cecilia's	Peter Young (RIP)
		12.05 MASS	St Mary's	
		5.00 Student Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
28	Friday	8.00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
		9.30 MASS	Oaklea Convent	
		12.05 MASS	St Mary's	Irene Dickinson (RIP)
		12.45 Holy Rosary	St Mary's	
29	Saturday	8.00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
	Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus	10.30 Confessions	Mercy Chapel	Carrie Waugh (RIP)
		11.00 MASS	St Mary's	
		11.45 Confessions	Mercy Chapel	Alf Hedley (RIP)
		6.00 VIGIL MASS	St Cecilia's	
		7.00 Songbirds' Concert	St Mary's	
30	SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)	8.00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
		9.00 MASS	Oaklea Convent	People of the Parish
		10.00 MASS	St Mary's	Mary White (RIP)
		5.00 MASS	St Mary's	Nancy Devine (RIP)



Ministry TO THE SICK



BEREAVEMENT Ministry

Announcements

Welcome to David Pinder

This weekend we welcome David Pinder, a seminarian for the Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle who is joining us for a short summer pastoral placement. David is from Stockton-on-Tees, and one the seminarians in formation for the priesthood for our diocese. He began his formation in 2020 with the pro-paedeutic year in Valladolid, Spain and has just completed his second year at St. Mary's College, Oscott. David, you're very welcome to Our Lady of Marcy Parish!

Songbirds' Summer Concert

The Songbirds are happy to invite you to attend their summer concert at St Mary's Church on 29 July at 7 p.m., followed by a fundraising in the Parish Centre. Tickets cost

£5 and are available at the door.

Summer Holidays

Things are beginning to quieten down in the parish as we approach the summer holidays. If you're going away in the next few weeks, have a safe journey and a great holiday. Also, if you visit another parish while you're away and see something you like, let us know about it!

Whether you're going away or staying in Sunderland, let's keep each other in our prayers.

Fr Christopher Hancock MHM • Parish Priest • pp.ourladyofmercy@diocesehn.org.uk
Fr Emmanuel Nuh Mbeh MHM • Assistant Priest • emmanuel.mbeh@diocesehn.org.uk
Rev Mr Eddy Barker • Parish Deacon • eddy.barker@diocesehn.org.uk
Miss Rebecca Leighton • University Lay Chaplain • rebecca.leighton@diocesehn.org.uk
Rev Canon Alec Barrass • Rt Rev. Séamus Cunningham • Assisting Clergy

Gospel Reflection, (Practising) Catholic, Live the Liturgy, Questions for the Week, Why do we do that?, Saint of the Week © LPI

Questions for the Week

First Reading:
Our Jewish wisdom writer describes God as lenient, powerful, and kind. What words would you use to de-

scribe God?
Second Reading:
Paul encourages the believers in Rome that the Spirit intercedes for us and teaches

Why do we do that?



Question:
Why do priests wear a Roman collar?
Answer:
The practice of priests wearing the Roman collar devel-

oped in the mid-nineteenth century as an alternative to wearing the cassock which in some places was seen as impractical or which was even outlawed by anti-Catholic legislation. Since its introduction, it has taken different forms, and if you visit different countries today, you will see variation in what priests wear.
The *Code of Canon Law* simply observes that priests

Saint of the Week



Stanley Francis Rother was born on March 27, 1935, in Okarche, Oklahoma to farmers. The eldest of four siblings, he discerned the call to priesthood while in high school and, upon graduating, studied locally at the St. John Seminary. Due to his trouble with learning Latin, though, he struggled academically and had to transfer to Assumption Seminary in San Antonio and then to Mount Saint Mary's Seminary in Maryland before he finally was able to complete his studies and graduate. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1963 in the diocese of Oklahoma City.
Following his ordination, Rother served as an associate

parish priest at four different parishes in the area before requesting to be sent on mission to Guatemala. He started his service at the diocese's mission to the Tz'utujil people of Santiago Atitlán in Southwest Guatemala in 1968.
Despite his difficulties with learning Latin, Father Rother committed to learning both Spanish and the Tz'utujil native language. While living among the Tz'utujil people, he supported a local radio station that transmitted language and math lessons, preached in both Spanish and Tz'utujil, and even founded a local hospital. He was well loved by those he lived among due to his ability to connect and his habit of smoking tobacco pipes with his neighbors. His community lived in abject poverty, and he made no concessions for himself, living alongside those he served in the same manner as they lived. His friends and community in Santiago Ati-

us what to pray for. What could you pray for this week?
Gospel:
In the parable of the weeds among the wheat, Jesus speaks privately to his disciples of the presence of the

evil one, the devil in this world. How can we best defend our family and loved ones from evil?

wear "suitable ecclesiastical garb" according to the judgments of the national bishops' conferences and local custom (no. 284). The most common form of clerical dress, outside of liturgical functions is a black suit and Roman collar. The use of the cassock is at the discretion of the individual priest. Priests who are members of religious communities are to follow the rules of their institute regarding the habit or other approved clothing.

In the end, whether a priest wears the Roman collar, a religious habit, or, as is the case in many European countries, a suit and tie (to distinguish them from Protestant clergy who wear a collar) the goal of their clerical clothing is to serve as a sign of their commitment to guide and to serve, and to also allow them to be truly public figures because they are ordained for the service of all.

tlán called him by his middle name, Francis, or in their native language, Aplá, as Stanley didn't have a native analogue.
Violence in Guatemala became prevalent and escalated significantly in the 1980's. Before his death, Fr. Rother experienced the destruction of his radio station, and friends going missing, being tortured, and murdered by right-wing guerilla forces. His own life was threatened by those perpetuating the violence and he became accustomed to constantly being watched and targeted. Despite all of this, he continued to serve and live alongside his community of Tz'utujil people stating, "The shepherd cannot run at the first sign of danger."
On July 28, 1981, just after midnight, three Spanish-speaking non-indigenous men snuck into the rectory of the mission looking for blood. After seizing the teenage brother of the associate pastor, they threatened to kill him if he didn't take them to Fr. Rother, the senior pastor. Once at his room's door, the

young captive called out a warning and, despite this, Fr. Rother decided to let his would-be assailants into the room in an effort to save the teenager. They quickly let the youth go and apprehended Fr. Rother instead. In an effort to protect everyone else on the premises, including the nine sisters in the convent across the patio, he chose to fight the men instead of to allow them to simply take him captive and, possibly, also have an opportunity to hurt or kidnap any of the others. During the altercation, the men shot him in the head, murdering him, and then ran from the premises.
His community greatly mourned his loss and requested that his heart remain enshrined in Guatemala, where it can be found to this day. He was officially recognized as a martyr for the faith by Pope Francis in 2016 — the first U.S.-born priest to be martyred and, as of 2017, the first to be beatified.

Flock Notes

In the hustle and bustle of our daily lives, we often find ourselves caught in a whirlwind of noise and distractions. Amidst the constant chatter, there lies a sacred skill—the art of listening. Mastering this art becomes opens a profound pathway to receiving divine guidance.
Listening is not merely hearing words; it is about opening our hearts and minds to the whispers of the divine. Whether in prayer, meditation, or moments of stillness, the act of attentive listening creates space for a deeper connection with the divine presence within and around us.


The first step to this art is to quiet our inner chatter. Just like tuning a radio to catch a clear signal, we silence our thoughts and worries to attune ourselves to the divine frequency. As we let go of our preconceived notions, we open ourselves to receive divine wisdom and guidance.
The art of listening also involves humility—the willingness to admit that we don't have all the answers. When we set aside our ego and approach the divine with a receptive spirit, we create room for transformative insights and revelations.
Moreover, attentive listening strengthens our intuition.

As we attune ourselves to divine whispers, we begin to discern the subtle nudges from God that lead us towards the right path. The divine voice often speaks through our instincts, urging us to take a leap of faith or offering comfort in times of distress.

The art of listening is a sacred gift that grants us access to divine guidance. As we tune in to the divine frequency and quiet our internal noise, we discover a profound connection with the wisdom and love that surround us. Through attentive listening that we find the answers we seek and the peace we crave.



Our Lady of Mercy Parish
27 Bridge Street, Sunderland SR1 1TQ
(0191) 567 5354
ourladyofmercy.sunderland@diocesehn.org.uk
www.sunderlandcatholic.com
St Mary's Church • 27 Bridge Street, Sunderland, SR1 1TQ
St Cecilia's Church • Ryhope Road, Sunderland, SR2 7TG



Our Lady of Mercy
Sunderland

A parish of the
Diocese of Hexham
and Newcastle

Reg Charity 1143450

