

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A
July 20, 2008

Readings: Wisdom 12:13, 16-19; Romans 8:26-27; Matthew 13:24-43

Whoever has Ears Ought to Hear

The parable of the weeds reminds me of my adventures with weeds around our house. We have a fairly large lot and a lawn that is, for the most part, green; except for late in the summer when everything gets real dry. Obviously, I don't try to water it, and I see the month of August as a blessing when I save a lot of time because I don't need to mow it very often. It is not a fine trimmed lawn with nice grass by any means, but it suits me just fine.

When the kids were young they complained and asked why we didn't have grass like their friends did. So one day I drove my truck down to the grain elevator and loaded up with a great quantity of weed-and-feed fertilizer and came home and spread it across the yard. About a week later, eighty percent of the lawn, the weed part, was dead. And the other twenty percent, the part that was actually grass, was growing like crazy. So here I was with a lawn that looked like heck, but that I had to mow twice a week. I learned my lesson to leave well enough alone. Jenni still obsesses about the weeds, especially about the Creeping Charlie or ground ivy that is particularly irritating to her, but I'm just happy it's green. I'll take the approach proposed in the parable and let the weeds grow up side-by-side with the grass.

The last two weeks Jesus has spoken in our gospel reading using parables. And on both occasions he ended with these words: "***Whoever has ears ought to hear.***" And so we need to not only sit and listen to these parables, we need to hear them, reflect upon them, and try to understand their message. We have three separate parables in our gospel this morning.

We have the short parable of the small mustard seed that grows up to a very large bush and the "***birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.***" The seed can represent the gospel and the Church is the tree that has grown to spread throughout the world against all odds and adversity.

We also have the short parable of the yeast added to the flour and again we can see the growth of the Church in the growth of the dough. But we can also see this parable on a more personal level because the growth comes in a different way; it occurs by multiplication of the yeast. And by this analogy we can see ourselves as individual yeast cells; we all have the responsibility to help the Church grow by bringing our faith to others and making more strong healthy Christians. It is not enough to take care of our own faith, we need to build up the Church by evangelizing to others, by multiplying our ranks.

And the main parable in our gospel this morning is the one about the enemy who sowed weed seeds in the farmer's wheat field. The weed he sowed was called ***Lolium temulentum*** (LO-lee-um tem-yoo-LEN-tum) which is also known as cockle or darnel. It is sometimes also referred to as false wheat because of its resemblance to wheat; it can only be recognized once the ears, or heads, appear. And by then, it is too late to pull it up without disturbing the wheat growing next to it.

We have ears so we ought to hear and see what lessons we can learn from this parable. God is the farmer and He plants only good seed, but the enemy, the devil, tries to undermine His creation by spreading bad seed. But our parable tells us that the enemy accomplished his task “*while everyone was asleep.*” And so we learn that we need to be vigilant. God gives us His Word, His truth in the scriptures. But the evil one sows lies and deceit. He gives us a message of self-love, of hate, and of greed, and he spreads pornography on the internet, in the movies, on TV, and in our music to attack our morality and family values. How much do we allow this to happen because we are asleep and inattentive? What bad seeds do we allow to come into our own homes? What pro-abortion politicians do we allow to get elected because they have a tax policy that is favorable to us, because they promise us jobs, or because we don’t care and maybe don’t even bother to vote? Do we take a stand against attacks by homosexual activists who want to redefine marriage and allow their agenda to ruin the family as God created it. In Boston the Catholic Church had to close down its adoption agency because the laws in Massachusetts prevented them from denying adoption to homosexual couples. How were these laws allowed to be enacted in a state that has a high Catholic population? Are Catholics sleeping? Do we fail to recognize the seeds that are being sown?

The weeds that are growing up in our society often act like good and nice people; that’s why we elect so many of them to office and pay money to see them at the movies or listen to their music. Just like the false wheat that looks like the real wheat, they are hard to recognize until we look at their fruit. The Church sowed the seed of *Humanae Vitae* and taught the truth about the sanctity of marriage and the dangers of contraception. The evil one sowed the seed of free love; an attractive message that if it feels good do it, no one is being hurt. But the fruit is now being harvested in our society; abortion, high divorce rates, same-sex unions, pornography, sexual abuse of spouses and children.

We have been asleep and complacent so long that it is now becoming difficult to even fight back. To preach the Church’s moral teachings is now being determined by judges to be considered hate speech. In many places I can be arrested for hate speech just for preaching the message in this homily; for stating my religious beliefs against homosexuality and abortion. We need to wake up.

I ran across a news story from a few weeks ago about a gay Grand Rapids man who is suing a Bible publisher for \$60 million. The story stated: “*Fowler filed his claim against Grand Rapids-based Zondervan Monday, alleging its Bibles’ references to homosexuality as a sin have made him an outcast from his family and contributed to physical discomfort and periods of ‘demoralization, chaos and bewilderment.’*”

Do we have the judges in our courts to rule wisely against these complaints, or do we have weeds growing in our courts? Do we have the politicians in office that will appoint wise judges, or do we have weeds who will appoint activist judges? We need to vote for and elect people of sound moral values; that will produce good fruits. It is more important than ever that you vote, and that you vote wisely. You must also be like yeast and encourage others to do likewise. There is a political funding organization named Emily’s List that provided financial support to pro-abortion women politicians. It’s interesting to look at the name of this organization because EMILY is an acronym which stands for Early Money Is Like Yeast, but theirs is a bad yeast. We need to counteract the bad yeast with the good yeast and that’s the responsibility of each and every one of us.

If we have ears we ought to hear.

Deacon Joe Hulway