

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Converting the Weeds**      Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time/A      July 23, 2017  
10:00 AM      Wis 12:13, 16-19;      Rom 8:26-27;      **Mt 13:24-43**      (God offers humanity  
nothing less than equality with God, both in glory and in suffering.)

Jesus was always trying to teach about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, and he had a hard time. People just don't get it. So he resorted to **parables**, which don't help too much unless you **really try to pay attention**. Last night after the homily somebody said to me, "But is that really in there?" Well that's the point. It really is, but **you have to draw it out**.

So here we have the **parable of the Weeds and the Wheat**. Now it's really about the life you know on one level. You know **good and evil are mixed in your lives**. You feel it; you experience it: good and evil. But I'm sure you have thought at times, wouldn't it be better if we just had good people in this world? Wouldn't it be better if the evil were just wiped out? And the psalms say exactly that: **wouldn't it be better if the evil were all gone?**

Jesus' point is no, **it wouldn't work** for two reasons. The first, obviously, **if you pull up all the weeds you kill the wheat too**; the good would go with the bad. They are interrelated in their root system. **We are all interrelated as people**. But there's a second reason more subtle, but it's the basis, the assumption of his entire mission, and that is that **the weeds really can be converted**. Now somebody said to me last night, "Well, is that in there?" Well, yes, it is implied in the entire gospel. Weeds can be converted into wheat. The gospel is all about the miraculous power of God to transform nature itself, including bread and wine, but not only. Jesus would have no mission at all if it weren't for his belief that weeds can be transformed into wheat, that **the wicked can become good, holy, life-giving, life-serving people**. This is what it means when we talk about **the ministry of mercy**, and indeed many of the Church's greatest saints started off as weeds until they gave into the grace of God.

So the presence of evil in our lives is not just an opportunity to be patient, having “the patience of a saint,” not only. **It is also part of God’s plan to extend mercy to all to an infinite degree.** But—there’s a big “but”—there’s a downside to mercy. **Mercy requires suffering.** To love the unlovable is very painful; many of you know this. To tolerate those who are intolerant chafes. To endure those who don’t care about others, including yourself, requires an infinite power called “divine charity”—divine charity, **divine love. That is what is required.**

Now it may seem that **God is asking us for an awful lot by asking us to love, tolerate, and endure the weeds of this world.** And it would be except for the fact that God has come into our lives to enable us to do this, the whole meaning of the incarnation of the Word of God. **He is not asking us to do anything he doesn’t do, and isn’t doing, and hasn’t done, and won’t do in the future. God offers humanity nothing less than equality with God, both in glory and in suffering.** As always, Jesus emphasizes that all suffering for the kingdom is, after all, temporary. It will pass. But the joy of the kingdom is not temporary. It will not pass. It is eternal. **And whether his audiences throughout time decide to follow or not does determine the fate of the world.** To that extent it is in our hands.