

Dear Parishioners,

This weekend, we continue reading from the Gospel of Saint Matthew, specifically Chapter 13, the chapter on parables. This is the primary chapter in the Gospel of Saint Matthew where Jesus speaks in parables, and He speaks seven (7) of them. That alone should tell us that we are dealing with Saint Matthew's evangelical hand in editing and placing these parables where he does in his story about Jesus.

If we were to read only the shorter Gospel, we'd hear just about the weeds and the wheat. This weekend's longer Gospel however, contains several parables. The parable of the weeds and the wheat occurs only in Matthew. No other Gospel includes this parable. Biblical scholars have wondered whether Matthew had access to a special source the other Gospel writers didn't, or perhaps he composed it himself. Even if that's true, the passage is still Scriptural, still inspired by God, and still authoritative. One reason Scripture scholars wonder whether Matthew composed it is because so many of the stories that are unique to him fit a pattern of judgment followed by a fiery end. This parable certainly falls into that category.

The good sower expects a harvest of wheat but is unaware that his enemy cast weeds into the field. The precise term for the weed is "darnel," which is a plant that looks like wheat. Darnel is sometimes called "false wheat." Rather than uproot the darnel, a process that would harm the wheat, both are allowed to grow together. In the end there will be a sorting, and the darnel is destined for the fire.

Such an image of the end times requires little imagination. This is hardly the sort of parable whose meaning is difficult to figure out. Instead, we see clearly that the followers of Jesus, the "Church" (*Saint Matthew is the only Gospel that uses that term*), is a field of wheat and weeds, the good and the bad. The Church does not (or should not) play God and determine who will be uprooted. Instead, uprooting is God's role and He will perform it ... in the end.

For anyone whose life is bound up in the Church (or any institution composed of human beings), today's Gospel rings true. There are weeds in the Church in every time and in every place. But it is not our role to uproot. At harvest time, God will separate the weeds from the wheat. Our role is simply to produce for the harvest.

How many of us would like to be in charge, deciding what's best for everybody ... what's best for the Church? When enemies get in the way, we would have the authority to uproot and be rid of them. Even if we are not the ones to be "in charge," how many of us would like someone else to do the uprooting or weeding? But such is not the way it is with God and with the Church. In this weekend's Gospel passage found only in Saint Matthew, we learn from Jesus that God is aware that there are weeds growing within the wheat. God is content to let them grow together, only to be separated later, at harvest time.

It is our task to simply let go and to let God be God while we grow into the harvest we are meant to be. Our lives are not to be filled with judgmentalism but with mercy. Consider Jesus' own words in the Gospel of Saint John, "*Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone.*" This gentle reminder for us as disciples, followers of the Son of God, is that we should be content to allow God to act in His own time.

May Saint Michael the Archangel defend, guide, protect, and intercede for us always! May you and your families be well and safe! Have a great week!

Fr. Larry