

16<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, A  
GOD'S TRANSFORMATIVE LOVE

“No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it.  
Let them both grow till the harvest;” (Matt.13: 29, 30)

The Parable of the Wheat and the Darnel is, for me, one of that reveals God's process of transformation made available to all of us, His erring children. The Loving God created us good (Gen. 1: 31) and planted us in the garden of the universe and allows us to grow in freedom and grace. But something happens along the way. The enemy comes into the universe and sows bad seeds in and among us that has corrupted us. Then some of the good seeds become bad, and grow with the good ones. “Sir, was it not good seeds that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?” Or we may like to put the questions thus: “Lord, did You not create all of us good? If so, why are some of us so bad?” And the Lord answers: “Some enemy has done this.” Yes, indeed, some enemy has done this. That Ancient Serpent, whose intent and purpose has always been to lure man from obedience to God and from doing God's will, has done this. God knows the enemy. But He will not stop him. Reason is, we were endowed with the intellect at creation to discern rights from wrongs, and with the capacity to freely make right choices. How we use or employ these capacities are entirely up to us. This has been the cause of our failings right from the beginning. We sin because we use our intellect and freedom, unwisely to make choices that are against the standards and demands of God. Perhaps we may want to ask ourselves: “What seed am I in the field of the universe? Who have I opened my heart to plant seeds?”

I love to point out the timing of the planting of the darnel by the enemy: “While everybody was asleep his enemy came ...” It was at night, while everyone was asleep. The symbolism of “night” and “sleep” is the period of darkness, which is associated with the works of the devil, as at when he entered Judas Iscariot during the Last Supper (Jn. 13: 30). It is the time of human vulnerability and defencelessness, when we are at the weakest and off-guard, against which St. Paul warns us (1 Thess. 5: 5). The devil watches these moments of unexpectedness (1 Thess. 5: 2; Rev. 3: 3) in our lives to creep in to sow the bad seeds in and among us. The devil is interested in destroying the good ones among us; to condemn their souls to eternal damnation. St. Peter Chrysologus draws our attention to this fact

thus: “Because the devil loves to sow heresies among the faithful, sins among saints, quarrel among the peaceful, treachery among the simple, wickedness among the innocent.” He adds another interesting point to this: “He’s not doing this because he is interested in the weed (darnel), but so that he may ruin the wheat.” The devil plants these seeds in us so as to destroy us – to destroy our souls. He has nothing to gain from the sins or the corrupt minds he has planted in us. Dear friends, let not our souls slumber as St. Paul exhorts us: “All of you are citizens of the light and the day; we do not belong to night and darkness. Let us not therefore, fall asleep as others do, but remain alert and sober” (1 Thess. 5: 5-6).

St Augustine of Hippo cautions us of the widespread seeds sown by the devil, when he said:

*Do you think that there’s any place within you the enemy has not sown weeds? Has he found cornfields anywhere and not scattered weeds in them? Do you imagine he has sown them among the laity, but not among the clergy, or the bishops? Or sown them among married men and not among those who have made profession of celibacy? Or sown them among married women and not among consecrated nuns? Or sown them in houses of laypeople and not in communities of monks? He’s scattered them everywhere, sown them everywhere. Has he left anything unmixed?*

This fact could be scary. But we love to ask: “How does Jesus deal with all these?” The parable presents two responses to the situation: first is the human reaction: “Do you want us to go and weed it out?” This reveals man’s impatience to human weaknesses, sins and failures. Our quick temper and impulsive judgements of others. The second: “No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn.” This is God response to our imperfections and waywardness. This reflects God’s transformative love that patiently waits: allowing us time to repent, return and be restored. “No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it” demonstrates the fact that in our hasty generalizations and premature judgements, we often condemn the innocent and destroy the fate of those who would have changed. The challenge therefore, is for

us to always be considerate in our dealings with others; to suspend judgements and to act patiently and lovingly with others knowing that, with the help of God's grace, even the worst sinner today can become a saint tomorrow.

This theme of waiting for that transformation to occur runs through all the three parables we have listened to today. The man who sows the mustard seed has to wait for the seed to grow into the "biggest shrub of all" in the Parable of the Mustard Seed. The woman, in the Parable of the Yeast, has to wait for the yeast to cause the flour to grow and the bread to set. Each of us is reminded that though our sins may be like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool" (Is. 1: 18). God, Who did not spare His Own Son, but sent Him to die for us (Rom. 8: 32), will not hastily condemn us and weed us out because we have failed. He surely will patiently wait for us to cooperate with His grace and be transformed. Therefore, we are invited to bear with ourselves, with others, and even with God patiently for His love to transform us.