

I'd like to and will speak specifically about the weeds and wheat parable that we just heard in today's gospel, but first, please indulge me as I digress for a moment. As I hope you are aware, the Catholic Church in the United States is in the midst of a 3 year Eucharistic Revival. This revival aims to inspire, educate and unite the faithful in devotion and belief in the real presence of Jesus, (Body, soul and divinity) in the Eucharist that we share each and every Mass. Our faith in the real presence is not blind faith. To the contrary, our faith is grounded in reason, in tradition and in evidence.

This week's gospel, and next week's point to the importance of language when teaching. Bless note how today, when Jesus teaches about the Kingdom of heaven, Jesus chooses to say that the Kingdom is like a man who sowed good seed; is like a mustard seed, or is like yeast. Next weekend, we will hear Jesus say that the Kingdom is like a buried treasure; is like a pearl of great price or is like a net that collects fish of every kind. Contrast, for a moment, how Jesus chooses to teach his apostles about the Eucharist that he leaves for them at the Last Supper. He takes bread, gives thanks and says: THIS IS my body and will go on to say THIS IS my blood. He does not choose to say my body is like this bread that nourishes or is like this wine that refreshes. Jesus knows that by proclaiming THIS IS my body and THIS IS my blood that he is offering a confusing and even shocking teaching. But he chooses to do so anyway. We teach and believe that Jesus said THIS IS because he meant it, and that teaching and those words were instituted in the earliest church and still continue 2000 years later. In the weeks and months to come we will become familiar with several other criteria that justify our faith in the real presence, but now it's time to return to the fields.

This week's gospel, like last weeks, finds us once again in the fields of God's Kingdom. And we learn that seeds of God's love, compassion and forgiveness that we sowed last week have been fruitful and grown into valuable wheat. However, within the midst of our desired crop, we also learn that an enemy has sowed seeds of evil in the very same wheat fields. And lo and behold, those seeds of deceit, selfishness, infidelity, hatred and materialism, to name but a few, are thriving equally well. I'm sure that we sometimes wonder: How can this be? Why doesn't our loving and holy Father destroy evil and the seeds of the devil? Why does God permit so much wrongdoing and suffering? We want to see the weeds of evil thrown into a fiery furnace and we want it NOW. But there is a complication.

I believe that our loving God doesn't destroy the weeds in his kingdom now because if he did, he would probably have to destroy all of us - for we are all sinners. And we are all responsible for the weeds of the world in which we live in in some way. The devil plants the seeds of evil, but human beings use their free will in choosing to water and nurture those bad seeds by turning away from Jesus and his teachings.

Flip Wilson, a comedian from the 70's, played a mischievous character named Geraldine, and Geraldine was always getting into or causing trouble. And every time Geraldine was challenged to explain her poor decisions, her answer was simple and straightforward: "The devil made me do it!" The devil may have planted the seeds of temptation and opportunity, but the devil can't make us do anything and the devil's seeds can't grow without men and women choosing to nurture those seeds. So should we all be destroyed?

I don't think so and fortunately us, our loving God doesn't operate that way. Rather than destroy us, he gives us every opportunity, every single breath - even the final breath of our lives to repent, to reform and to enter into right relationship

with him. As individuals we tend to possess both good and evil. Sometimes we embrace our Lord's blessings and on other occasions we resist. Jesus' own 12 apostles were the same way. One moment they follow closely and then suddenly we find them following at a distance. Each of us struggles to live as God intended at some time or another. But we needn't worry. The Kingdom will come and our Lord's will will be done. However, the weeds and wheat will be forever intertwined. Thankfully for us, our loving Father will not throw us into the fire with the weeds so long as we seek to welcome him into our hearts.