

July 23, 2023

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wis 12:13, 16-19 | Rom 8:26-27 | Mt 13:24-43

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

The parables were always my favorite Gospel readings when I was growing up. One we just heard, regarding the wheat and the weeds, was particularly comforting to me as a child. It was simple to understand, I thought: Those of us in God's Church were obviously the wheat and, of course, destined for salvation. We just needed to endure living among "the weeds" while we are in this world. As an adult, however, I realize that Jesus' message is much more challenging - much more convicting regarding my own failures and sins: I could be a weed! And while I certainly don't like that thought, I also don't like considering that anyone would be thrown into the "fiery furnace." After all, we are supposed to love one another and desire that they become part of the body of Christ and have eternal life. The reality of this world, however, is that temptation and sin surround us. Fortunately, Jesus gives us himself as the Bread of Life in the Eucharist, and we have the gift of mercy in the sacrament of reconciliation. These sacraments, as well as prayer, give us the "nutrients" we need to ensure that we remain the wheat God has sown in his field, and that we can help others be that too.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

While the sacraments can fortify our faith, what about our neighbors, friends or family who are not Catholic or who have fallen away from the Church? This is where evangelization comes in - inviting someone to join you at Mass or suggesting a religious book they might enjoy reading. If you don't think such a simple act could make much difference in the life of another, take heart in the parables contained in the long form of today's Gospel. In those, Jesus reminds us that it doesn't take much to spread the Good News of the kingdom of heaven. The smallest of seeds can turn into the largest of plants and a small amount of yeast can leaven much flour. And if we have moments where we lack courage or feel in need of assistance, St. Paul reminds us that "the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness." Never underestimate the power of the Advocate: he can help us pray, can intercede for us, and provide what we need to be good seed in the world.

PRAY Let us pray this week for the strength to live out our baptismal promise to reject evil, and to gain courage so as to be a witness to God, and to work toward building his kingdom on earth wherever and whenever we can.