

16th Sunday (A)

- One of the things I marvel at about Jesus is what a wonderful teacher he was.
- Last week, today & next Sunday we hear how he taught so well by means of parables, & over these 3 Sundays they are parables about the kingdom, the reign of God.
- Last week we heard the parable about the sower, the seed & the soil...today, about the field of wheat & weeds, about the mustard seed, about the yeast...& next Sunday about the treasure in the field, the pearl of great price, & the dragnet.
- Parables use images from everyday life; they have a surprising twist to them that tell something unexpected & they raise questions, unsettle the comfortable & the complacent - they challenge those prepared to listen.
- Jesus' parables teach us that we find God in the everyday aspects of our lives.
- While the images Jesus used were from the day-to-day experience of people's lives, the way he used them made people sit up & take notice.
- The way Jesus used the images was often to take them to extremes in order to make a point.
- Today's Gospel has 3 parables, one main one & 2 small ones.
- Hear how Jesus uses ordinary images & how he twists them...why leave the weeds among the wheat?
- The mustard seed grows into a bush, not a tree, so what is Jesus saying?
- Why is the kingdom of heaven like yeast?
- The early Church had a problem with its members, & the 1st parable of the wheat & the weeds was included by Matthew to address that problem.
- There were people in the early Church, some of whom were disruptive & others, half-hearted.
- Some of the leaders in the early Church, the servants in the parable, had the attitude of, 'well, if they don't measure up, they're out.'
- The problem with that attitude was that they might have kicked out those who weren't evil but failed because of human frailty.
- And also to exclude these people may alienate the good members of the community who were family or friends of the weaker members.
- So the point of the parable is to take the longer view...be patient, wait until harvest when we can leave it to God to do the sorting.
- Who among us is perfect?
- We have a tendency to divide people into two categories: good & bad, saints & sinners. But this division is quite unreal.
- People are not so easily categorised, even though that's what the media tends to promote – people who are the epitome of evil, monsters.
- But human beings are complex, & we find things that are at odds with one another coexisting in the same human being.
- The advice of the parable in today's Gospel is to have patience with each other.
- Patience is familiar with human weakness. Patience is compassionate.

- Patience doesn't accept sin & evil, but never abandons the sinner, just as you as parents don't accept inappropriate behaviour from your children, but still love them.
- Just think of how God is patient with you & me!
- We acknowledge that there may be people who need to be patient with us too.
- We are an extraordinary mixture of good & bad.
- Moreover, the roots of good are so entwined with the roots of evil that one can't be pulled up one without pulling up the other.
- We need to learn to be patient & lenient, towards ourselves in the first place. We need to be hospitable towards **all** that we are.
- We need to acknowledge the dark side of ourselves, without conceding victory to it; we need to struggle on in spite of the weeds, confident that with God's help, the good will finally triumph.
- It is through struggle that we grow, provided we don't throw in the towel.
- And we must then be lenient towards others.
- Even though we see only part of a person's life we tend to rush to judgement.
- We are too quick to classify people, & once we have classified them, we leave them no room to change.
- Only God has the right & the knowledge to judge; yet God is patient & tolerant - By concentrating on people's vices, we become blind to their virtues.
- We are too eager to voice our criticisms, but reluctant to give a single word of encouragement, & in this way we bar every road to improvement.
- So, let's not just knock others, but seek out the good in everyone, reveal it, bring it out.
- A person will be judged, not by a single act or stage in his life, but by his/her whole life. That is why judgement can't come until the end.
- A person may make a great mistake, but by the grace of God, change.
- Because of the presence of evil, both in our own lives & in the world, we have to struggle. But it is through struggle that we grow.
- Struggle awakens all that is good & precious within us & among us.
- One could say that the presence of evil could even be said to be necessary, because unless we had to make choices between good & evil, no virtue would be possible - On harvest day the farmer separated the weeds from the wheat.
- He reaped a fine harvest.
- Even though it fell short of the hundred percent he had hoped for, the quality was excellent.
- And for some strange reason, he got more satisfaction from reaping that harvest than from any other. There is more joy when victory is hard won.
- The parable is both realistic & optimistic.
- In the end good triumphs because truth & goodness are invincible.
- Maybe in your prayer you might bring to Jesus the people you need to have patience with...even those closest to you, & maybe you might pray with gratitude to God for the patience he exercises towards you.