

17th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

St. Matthew 13:44-52

We all know the inestimable value of our Faith and of the kingdom of heaven. We know it because of parables like these, which we have heard since our childhood. But the hope of the beauty of the kingdom of God and the life to come is often marred or tarnished by the life we now live.

We can end up having a mixed response to the Gospel. We know that all that we have must be used for good and for the glory of God, and all that we do must be in service to the Gospel, but that demands a whole lot of sacrifice. We do not always feel like using our money for the relief of the poor. We do not always feel like making known the Gospel. We get tired, we get bored, we find other things to interest us. Part of the problem is our failure to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord and His kingdom. If we were to do that then so much of what we think is important now—money, fashion, cars—would fade in comparison to the joy we know there to be in our life to come. If we were more like the man who finds treasure buried in the field and “out of his joy... goes and sells whatever he has and buys that field” then our restlessness would end.

But it is not easy. For all that we try to do to inaugurate the kingdom of heaven there is still such immense injustice in the world. The bad guys still seem to win a little bit more than the good guys, children still die, a woman who has worked her life to relieve the pain of others is murdered, a man who is an husband and a father still dies in an accident. All of this makes it so much more difficult to live patiently and hopefully. But then Our Lord understood this which is why he talked about a treasure hidden, or of finding one precious pearl. Much of what is valuable, even by worldly standards, is buried and hidden. Think about gold and silver and jewels. In the book of Job, the Lord says: “Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold to be refined. Iron is

taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from ore. Miners put an end to darkness, and search out to the farthest bound the ore in gloom and deep darkness. They open shafts in a valley away from human habitation; they are forgotten by travellers, they sway suspended, remote from people. As for the earth, out of it comes bread; but underneath it is turned up as by fire. Its stones are the place of sapphires, and its dust contains gold" (*Job* 28:1-6).

The way in which gold and silver and jewels are found underground in mines is the same way in which we can find the beauty and truth of the Gospel—by patience and perseverance until the final judgement. That is why Our Lord says that the weeds or darnel must be left to grow among the wheat until the harvest, for if the weeds were plucked out then there is a risk that some wheat would be removed with them. Or why the dragnet hauls up good fish as well as bad. It will not be until the harvest, or until the catch is brought into the boat—that is, the final judgement—that the good and the bad will be separated. For now it is a necessary evil, so to speak. We all have this experience, right around us, of those who plant themselves amidst us and seek to lay waste to what is good by spreading their poison and lies—the weeds amongst the wheat. But just as Our Lord is patient of us now, so, too, we must be patient.

As Catholics we have so many examples of heroic virtue to draw upon—Our Lord Jesus in His life, our Blessed Mother standing helplessly at the foot of the cross, the martyrs, the Saints. We have a rich and beautiful tradition to draw upon of aestheticism, sacrifice and prayer. We have the holy Angels and our Guardian Angel to guide us and lead us. We have each other to support us. And we can do no better than to remember the words of St. Paul, "that all things work together for good for those who love God" (*Rom.* 8:28).