

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

My beloved brothers and sisters, the people who were listening to Jesus' stories, would have immediately understood them. The story of an enemy deliberately trying to sabotage the harvest of the wealthy landowner, actually happened.

Darnel is a very noxious weed that also has hallucinogenic properties and is very bitter- it would have spoiled the harvest if it was not removed. Everyone was very aware of the process of making bread, and witnessed the great miracle of a small amount of flour transformed into a huge mass of dough by the yeast acting unseen. In the Holy Land, the mustard seed is almost as fine as flour, and yet it will grow into a bush 6-8' tall, and was very important to the food of a family in the springtime. Very often, I will make my own bread from scratch, including milling my own flour. There is nothing quite amazing and so satisfying as a freshly made loaf of bread; it is still a miracle to me!

In the readings for today, Jesus reminds us of the almighty power of God over evil; but He also reminds us that there is an enemy at work in the world that wants to sabotage the growth that God has intended from the very beginning of the creation of man and woman, because of the jealousy of the evil one! Even though God has poured out His Divine Grace of Salvation upon the world in the Person of His Son our Lord Jesus Christ; nonetheless, God does not force His gift of infinite love on anyone. It is offered, but we must receive it and cooperate with it, both personally, and in the Church! Jesus reminds us that the evil one is always at work trying to destroy what God has initiated by His love, and this evil will be hard at work, until the end of time when we will be gloriously liberated from it by the Glorious coming of the Lord! The great good news of the Gospel is very simple: even though evil is at work in the world, in the Church and in our lives, Holiness, like the yeast in the dough, like the very tiny grain of mustard seed, is more powerful, and if we do not resist it, it is always at work trying to make us greater than we can be by ourselves!

The first reading reminds us that although someone can be a master of moral disguise; nonetheless, the Lord sees through the surface of things and judges rightly and truly. He is always at work trying to warn, to urge, to challenge our

lives with the Truth that can set us free to be the Holy Men and Women He has created us to be! That is the work of conscience, unless of course, we kill the conscience by closing our hearts to His Divine Work! The Lord makes us responsible for our actions, accountable to justice; yet, that doesn't put His Mercy and Kindness on hold. He is always at work trying, urging, and calling us back to Himself- don't give up on yourselves or your children who have strayed, because God never does!

My beloved brothers and sisters, the great Good News of the Gospel is this: God does not leave us alone to do this work alone! He is always at work within us in the Holy Spirit within our hearts, who is always working to make us Holy! The Holy Spirit is the force of God at work in our prayers, our good works, and in the Sacraments, especially Confession and Eucharist, to this end. That is why the Holy Spirit is always searching out our hearts to root out the darnel and urging us to the Good and to Holiness of life! In the same way, God is always at work in the Church and the world. God will win!