
GOOD SEED AND BAD



In the Gospel of Matthew there is a really upsetting parable which forces us to confront the scandalous reality of evil in our lives. "The reign of God may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds through the wheat, and then made off. When the wheat crop began to mature and yield grain, the weeds made their appearance as well" (Mt. 13:24-26).

PATIENCE!

Owners of beautiful lawns and grounds call on landscape specialists to care for their property, to ensure that no dandelions or other unwanted weeds grow there; this the specialists accomplish with the use of pesticides, unless this is forbidden by environmental legislation. However, this was not Jesus' attitude. The servants said to the owner, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where are the weeds coming from?" The owner answered: "I see an enemy's hand in this." "Do you want us to go out and pull them up?" "No," he replied, "pull up the weeds and you might take the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will order the harvesters, 'First collect the weeds and bundle them up to burn, then gather the wheat into my barn'." (27-30) A truly realistic answer, and very compassionate, too. Some of the Apostles who were nicknamed the "sons of thunder" would not have been as patient as the Master. They would have quickly called upon the fire of heaven to come down and destroy the lot!

PAINFUL AWARENESS

Saint Paul the Apostle had a very surprising experience: he had discovered that he, too, could produce "weeds" in his life. In his letter to the Romans he confesses: "I cannot even understand my own actions. I do not do what I want to do but what I hate... This indicates that it is not I who do it but sin which resides in me.... The desire to do right is there but not the power. What happens is that I do, not the good that I will to do, but the evil I do not intend... What a wretched man I am! (Rm. 7:15-24). If the Apostle Paul can reach such a conclusion and come to such humble admission, what lessons could we draw for ourselves? Here, the words of my old canon law professor come to mind: "We must not be surprised at what can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time!" The enemy has sown in and around us those pesky weeds we have so much trouble controlling.

THE TRUTH!

Advent and Lent are very special times to help us become aware and acknowledge the unfortunate harvest of weeds in us and around us. This awareness is also the bearer of abundant graces, it can reveal the truth about us and others, like the prophet Nathan challenging King David: "You are that man!... You took Uriah's wife to be your wife, and him you killed..." (1 Sam. 12:7-10).

WEEDS!

Parents who catechise their children soon realise that they are not alone in transmitting certain statements, principles and values to their children. “Where have you learned such nonsense? Who told you that? Who put **that** in your head?” Regular customers at fast-food restaurants often pass on to others groundless information, just plain gossip. “I’ve heard that... I’ve been told that... it seems that...,” and the weed is scattered from one to the other, to the detriment of someone else. Even those faithful to the parish community gathering are susceptible to this procedure of the Evil One, when information is either passed on inadequately, or not at all. Some statements have been attributed to me on such and such a topic when I have written nothing of the kind, nor commented on it: the Evil One is there to scatter the weed of discord within the diocesan community. The worst kind of weed I have come across were certain insinuations regarding those in authority. Any statement could be made, without having to prove anything! If slander is a real social plague, defamation of character is its twin: both are terrible afflictions, root and crop!

PREVENTION, OR HEALING?

If all our fields could be protected against weeds we would certainly be willing to expend time, money, and energy for this. This anti-Evil prevention would eliminate the enemy’s attempts from the very first, and we would be well rid of this bad crop. We must not fall victim to deformation and disinformation of all kind. Discernment and a bit of skepticism must be exercised, regarding everything we hear. Paul’s wonderful piece of advice could stand us in good stead: in his concern to point out a path superior to every other, he writes: “Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth.” And he ascribes great things to charity: “There is no limit to love’s forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure” (1 Cor. 13:6-7).

CELEBRATION OF FORGIVENESS

In wishing you all to welcome the sacrament of Reconciliation into your life, my hope is that all the baptised among us experience God’s love, kindness, and forgiveness. God alone is capable of sowing in our hearts the good seed to produce the rich and bountiful harvest. He can help us share in his reign of justice and peace, in his kingdom of light and grace. As songwriter Robert Lebel puts it: “God has scattered the Word as one scatters seed, so that the harvest of the Kingdom may last to the end! Like the seed sprouting in the field... The Word in the heart is plain and good. The sower has come back and harvested them; the Word has given its hundredfold!”

+ François Thibodeau ym

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
Bishop of Edmundston

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