

# Sunday, July 19, 2020

## 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

2nd Reading: Romans 8:26-27

Responsorial: Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

Gospel: Matthew 13:24-43

### Fulfilling Our Call to Help Build the Kingdom of God on Earth

*The kingdom of heaven is like . . . (Matthew 13:31, 33)*

In his parable of the weeds among the wheat, Jesus confirms what we already know to be true: evil exists in the world. We see evidence of it all around us. Sometimes it even seems as if evil is winning out. Will the weeds eventually choke out the wheat and overrun the field of God's kingdom?

Jesus assures us that it will not. In the end, the angels of God will sort the good from the bad, and evil will be destroyed forever (Matthew 13:41). The fact is, by his death and resurrection, Jesus has already won the victory over evil. Someday God's kingdom will reign over all the earth.

Meanwhile, how can we hasten its coming? It's significant that after telling the first parable about the weeds and the wheat, Jesus tells two more parables about the kingdom of heaven. It's like a tiny mustard seed that grows into a large bush (Matthew 13:31-32). It's like a little yeast that leavens a whole loaf of bread (13:33). These are hopeful images! God's kingdom isn't static. It begins in many small ways and then grows and grows.

You have a part to play in its growth! With every prayer, with every act of faith, with every good deed, you help to build the kingdom of heaven on earth. Making time for prayer, worshipping at Mass, helping the poor, sharing your faith, reaching out to a friend in need, speaking out in defense of life—in these ways and more, you can participate in growing God's kingdom. Yes, they can seem like small things. But so are the mustard seed and that little pinch of yeast.

So don't get discouraged by the evil you see, and don't give up hope. Believe that your small acts of faithfulness really do make a difference. And taken together with other believers, they become a mighty force in choking out the weeds of this world.

*"Lord, may your kingdom come!"*

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## Sunday, July 19, 2020

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. The first reading begins with these words: *There is no god besides you who have the care of all, that you need show you have not unjustly condemned. For your might is the source of justice; your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all. For you show your might when the perfection of your power is disbelieved; and in those who know you, you rebuke temerity. But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us; for power, whenever you will, attends you. And you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind; and you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins.*
  - The first reading describes the attributes of God. What do these words mean to you? How does the reading's description of God's attributes compare with your own personal beliefs?
  - Why is it important that our response to God's mercy be *deeds* that are *just* and *kind* and filled with *hope*? In what way is there a conflict between justice and kindness in your life? Why do you think we have a tendency to demand justice from God for others, but mercy for ourselves? Why is this contrary to the Gospel?
2. The responsorial psalm, like the first reading, also describes many of the attributes of God: *You, O LORD, are good and forgiving, abounding in kindness to all who call upon you and You, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and fidelity.* It ends with these words: *Turn toward me, and have pity on me; give your strength to your servant.*
  - How does this psalm also reflect God's goodness, forgiveness, kindness, mercy, and grace toward you?
  - We know that God forgives us when we confess our sins? How ready are you to forgive those who have wronged you, even if they have never apologized to you? How important is this to God (also see the first reading)?
3. In the letter to the Romans, St. Paul tells us that the *The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will.*
  - Does St. Paul's description of the work of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8 add anything to your own understanding of how the Holy Spirit works in your life? How have you experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?
  - How often during the day do you turn to the Holy Spirit who *comes to the aid of our weakness* --to seek his help and guidance? Is it sufficient? If there is room for improvement, what steps can you take to improve it?
4. In the Gospel reading, Jesus presents three parables to describe what the "kingdom of heaven" is like: one regarding wheat and weeds, another about a mustard seed, and the third one about yeast. In addition, they show that even the smallest of actions (e.g., the sowing of a mustard seed and the mixing of yeast with flour) can have a very large effect. The reading ends with Jesus explaining the parable of the weeds in the field: *He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.*
  - In what ways do each of these parables describe what the kingdom of heaven is like?
  - Do you see these parables as three independent ones, or are they related to one another? How?
  - We often hear the phrase, "actions have consequences." This is certainly true in each of the parables. What small actions do you think the Lord is asking you to take in your life that could have a major impact?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the Gospel reading and these words: *The kingdom of heaven is like . . .* (Matthew 13:31, 33). It includes these words: "God's kingdom isn't static. It begins in many small ways and then grows and grows. You have a part to play in its growth! With every prayer, with every act of faith, with every good deed, you help to build the kingdom of heaven on earth."
  - The meditation mentions various ways we can participate in building the kingdom of heaven on earth, including: "With every prayer, with every act of faith, with every good deed." How are you doing in these areas?
  - What new ways may the Lord be calling you to help build his Kingdom?

**Take some time now to pray to the Lord for the coming of his kingdom. Also, ask him for the grace to participate in a greater way in building it. Use the prayer below from the end of the mediation as the starting point.**

***"Lord, may your kingdom come!"***

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization ([www.christlife.org](http://www.christlife.org)), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal ([www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National Fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at [mblumberg@wau.org](mailto:mblumberg@wau.org) or [mblumberg@aol.com](mailto:mblumberg@aol.com).]