

# SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year A

Wisdom 12:13,16-19

Romans 8:26-27

Matthew 13:24-43

## GATHERING

*(An unlit candle, a nice patch of soil with both weeds and good plants (e.g. grass or flowers) set in a dish or bowl, and a weeding tool are arranged on a table in the gathering place.)*

## OPENING PRAYER

*(The candle is lit. The leader invites members to be present to the God who is present to them.)*

All: Lord, you are good and forgiving.

Leader: You, O LORD, are good and forgiving,  
abounding in kindness to all who call upon you.  
Hearken, O LORD, to my prayer  
and attend to the sound of my pleading.

All: Lord, you are good and forgiving.

Leader: All the nations you have made shall come  
and worship you, O LORD,  
and glorify your name.  
For you are great, and you do wondrous deeds;  
you alone are God.

All: Lord, you are good and forgiving.

Leader: You, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in kindness and fidelity.

Turn toward me, and have pity on me;  
give your strength to your servant.

All: Lord, you are good and forgiving.

Psalms 86:5-6,9-10,15-16

## COMMENTARY

Wouldn't it be great to weed out the church from time to time? It would help everyone, not so?

Especially the lukewarm Christians, don't you think? Wouldn't it shake people up and challenge them to be more committed? Perhaps, if we got rid of the weeds from time to time it would help the church become more what Jesus called it to be: salt of the earth and light for the world.

But then comes the question, who determines who's a *weed* and who's *wheat*? And *how* do you make that determination? For that matter, *when* do you make that determination? Was Jacob *wheat* when he cheated Esau and lied to his father? Was Paul *wheat* when he was persecuting Christians? Was Augustine *wheat* when he was living a life of debauchery? And what makes any one of us so sure that we're *wheat* and not a *weed*?

If we check our own behavior, we can see that our own judgment about others is not perfect. If we reflect honestly on our own lives, we see that we are both *weeds* and *wheat*. We all have characteristics that make us unique. We have strengths and weaknesses, a bright side and a dark side. The qualities and gifts we have can be used for good or they can be ignored or misused. They can be used for God and others or they can be used only for ourselves. Ambiguity can be found in the many corners of our lives. The *wheat* and *weeds* seem to intertwine everywhere.

Conversion is a lifelong process. It takes a lifetime of learning and growth to recognize our talents, develop them and apply them to the right things. It takes a lifetime to change our hearts to be in accord with the heart of God. We have a big God. He gives us space to grow; he gives us time; he doesn't mow us down. God is just, but God is also

merciful. God doesn't condemn us for one bad act or two, or even many. God allows us to mature and see our own weaknesses so we can change more fully, to produce the fruit, like the grain that ripens in time on the stalk of wheat.

Our God is a patient God. One way we can change to be more like God is to learn to be patient with all the unfinished people in our lives. God is at work in them, too.

## FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How do you deal with the ambiguity in your own heart and life?

How do you respond to the *weed* people in your world?

How have you experienced God's patience with you?

What good thing is ripening in your life?

Share the story of someone in your life whom you once thought was a *weed* and whom you now see as *wheat*. Who changed?

## RESPONSE IN ACTION

Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Pray for the grace to identify a *weed* or two in your life that you might work to remove. Celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation for the grace to make that change.

Offer to weed the garden of an elderly neighbor or the plants around your church.

As an individual or as a community, contact Heifer International ([www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org)) to learn about and to donate a *Gardener's Gift Basket* or some other agricultural necessity to the poor.

## SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

*(The leader invites the community to a time of quiet. After a minute of silence, the gospel of the week is re-read by a member of the community. Following the reading, the leader poses this question to the members: "What does Christ say to you/us in hearing this gospel today?" The*

*community pauses for a full five to seven minutes of prayerful attention to how Christ speaks to them in this gospel. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two or a brief thought that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally.*

*When the sharing is complete, members stand in a circle to sing, "As Grains of Wheat." The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, members join hands to pray the Lord's Prayer. When the prayer is complete, members exchange a sign of peace.)*

