

# OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH

## HOMILY FOR 16<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)

### 23<sup>RD</sup> JULY 2017

A frequently asked question is: Why does God not save us from evil people? Today's Gospel could be an answer to that question.

It's the second of Jesus' parables in Matthew's chapter 13; another one about sowing and growing.

Someone sows seed, expecting them to grow into flowers, vegetables or fruit but, in the night, an enemy secretly sows weed seeds among the good seed.

When seeds begin to show above the surface of the ground they all look similar.

The sower cannot tell the difference until the plants have grown.

Then he/she faces a dilemma, like the one I shared with our church gardeners last week.

We were looking at a very large plant growing in the garden. They had not sown it and did not know what it was. It did not belong there. Should they pull it out?

They decided to leave it because if they pulled it up now they would pull up all the good plants around it.

Jesus is making the point that if God weeds out evil people the good will suffer, too.

This does not mean that God tolerates evil. The end of the parable tells us clearly that God *will* destroy evil but at the right time.

The right time is when God "will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead".

Then they can be separated safely, just as at harvest time, when all is cut, weeds can be burnt and good plants saved.

So Jesus is making a very important point in answer to our question: God will destroy evil but at the right time, a time which he alone decides.

No one has the authority to punish or condemn anyone in the name of God.

There is another reason.

The first reading from Wisdom ends by saying, "you have given your people the good hope that after sin you will grant repentance."

God wants people to have every opportunity to repent and be forgiven.

Death was never God's intention, "nor for his pleasure does life cease to be" (Wisdom 1:13).

There's another point of view.

The field in the parable can also be seen as the individual soul, a mixture of good and evil so complex that God cannot eliminate an evil person without destroying the good that is in them also.

"We are neither wholly bad nor wholly good who live our lives under Milk Wood", wrote Dylan Thomas.

That's probably true of most people.

Our Church teaches that after death we will go through the process of purgatory when evil will be removed from our souls, like the burning of the weeds, and our purified souls will be gathered into God's eternal kingdom.

For anyone who is or knows a victim of evil this is very hard to accept.

It can be hard to pray when we are suffering.

St. Paul helps us in our second reading.

He tells us that when we really pray the Holy Spirit inspires our thoughts and our words.

When we "do not know how we ought to pray the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express.

Prayer does not need words or even thoughts, just God and ourselves together in concentrated silence, an act of faith and a strengthening of hope.

So if we have a problem with evil Jesus is assuring us that evil has no place in God's kingdom but only God has the right to decide when and how to remove it.

**Rev Geoffrey Carey**