

## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

July 19, 2020 Cycle A

**Facilitator:** *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

**Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.**

**Opening prayer:** *Loving and caring God, thank you for gathering us together to share your Word. Send your Holy Spirit into our midst so that we may hear the message you want us to hear in these readings. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**Response to last week's Word:** [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

**Facilitator reads focus statement:** The first and third readings speak of God as both patient and merciful with sinners. Paul tells his readers that one of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to help us to pray, especially when we feel inadequate and weak.

*Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.*

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

### FIRST READING: Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

The Book of Wisdom is written by a Greek-speaking Jew living in an urban area of the Diaspora (Jews living outside of Israel). His Goal is to defend Judaism against the pervasive influence of Hellenism (Greek pagan philosophies). He wants to make sure that his people will not become "tainted" with foreign ways.

We are reminded of God's tolerance and merciful patience. Though God is all-powerful, he uses his power to show mercy and clemency. By doing this, God is seeking to teach people to treat each other (including non-believers) with the same kindness and to temper justice with mercy.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM 86

This lament places emphasis on God's patience and forbearance in line with the theme of the first and third readings.

### SECOND READING: Romans 8:26-27

Paul reminds us that we are not alone in our prayer moments. The Holy Spirit accompanies us and is always praying in us. The 'groanings' of the Spirit are linked to those of creation, that is, the world and our desire for redemption. If we turn to God, we will understand the ways of the Spirit. Commenting on these verses, Patricia Sanchez writes these comforting words:

*Happily, Paul reminds us today that – even in our weakest moments of inarticulate struggle in prayer, even in the rut of the banal and routine, even in the throes of seething resentment or in the tears of burdensome sadness – the presence of the Spirit guarantees that our wordlessness be translated into a prayer which centers us once again and renews the communion which sustains us.*

(Used with permission *The Word We Celebrate: Commentary on the Sunday Lectionary Years A, B, C*, by Patricia Sanchez, -Sheed & Ward publisher (9-1-89.)

### PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Matt. 13:24-43

*As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.*

**A participant reads the Gospel,  
then all pause to reflect.**

*As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.*

### GOSPEL: Matthew 13:24-43

Matthew presents us with three more "kingdom parables" intended to teach that the coming of the Kingdom is a growth process that occurs over a very

long period. Thus, patience and tolerance are needed for the followers of Jesus.

The Parable of the *Wheat and Weeds* would be a familiar story to Jesus' listeners. They have all seen weeds sprouting up among good seed. The servants want to rush out into the fields to pull up all the weeds. In Jesus' time, the religious leaders have no patience or compassion for sinners. They want all of them weeded out. And so it will be in Matthew's community several decades later when some members under religious persecution will deny their faith and will be shown very little compassion by some leaders in Matthew's community.

In the parable, the Master (representing God) calls for patience, "*Let both weeds and wheat continue to grow.*" Ezekiel tells us that God desires not the death of the sinner, but that he repents and lives. The parable illustrates God's patience with sinners until the Day of Judgment (harvest time).

Jesus condemns elitism and underscores the fact that the Christian community and we, individually, will always be a "mixed bag" of good and not so good people: saints and sinners. The role of Church leaders is to preach and practice repentance, mercy, patience and compassion, and to leave judgment to God.

The parables of the mustard seed and yeast tell us that small beginnings can lead to big endings. God is at work making things happen even if we are not aware of it.

In the third part of this Gospel (verses 36-43), in response to the disciples question, Jesus comments on the parable of the wheat and weeds. Until the Day of Judgment, the Church should love, repent, show mercy, and stay out of deciding who will be saved. But a final Day of Judgment will come when those who are evil and unrepentant will pay the ultimate price for their sin, but those who have remained faithful or have repented from their sins will be welcomed into heaven. Until that Day, God will be patient and merciful and so should the Church. The Church's job is to preach repentance, show leniency, and leave the judging to God.

### FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse or image in the readings caught your attention or drew

you in. Was there a verse or aspect of the readings that challenged you?

*The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.*

2. The second reading on the role of the Holy Spirit in our prayer life is quite interesting. How is this reading special to you?

3. Do we think that the Church would be better off without some types of people?

4. How hard or easy is it for you to live alongside or converse with people whose beliefs are very different from yours politically and spiritually, and to refrain from judging them?

5. Fr. Tom Green, S.J., says that God can use our sins (weeds) as well as our virtues to draw us closer to him. What do you think about that?

6. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

### RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestion: Refrain from judging 'the weeds' in your environment and become more aware of the weeds within yourself

**JOURNALING.** *Having listened to God's Word and listened to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

### PRAYING WITH THE WORD

**Facilitator:** Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Jesus, help me to always remember that all of us, including myself, are a mixed bag, and to remember that my job is to love people, and God's job is to judge them.*

**CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING,  
PETITION AND INTERCESSION**

**Facilitator:** What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we need to pray? Pray for the grace to accept others (and yourself) despite their (and your) shortcomings.

**CLOSING PRAYER (together)**

*Lord of the harvest,  
help me to recognize and nurture  
what is good in my life.  
May I often remember  
that one day may be my last day.  
Amen.*