

Reading for the Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

19th July 2026

First reading

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

‘You give repentance for sins.’

Neither is there any God besides you, whose care is for all,
to whom you should prove that you have not judged unjustly.

For your strength is the source of righteousness,
and your sovereignty over all causes you to spare all.

For you show your strength when men doubt the completeness of your power,
and you rebuke any insolence among those who know it.

You are sovereign in strength but you judge with mildness, and with great forbearance you govern us;
for you have power to act whenever you choose.

Through such works you have taught your people that the one who is righteous must be kind,
and you have filled your sons with good hope, because you give repentance for sins.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 86(85):5-6. 9-10. 15-16a. R5a

O Lord, you are good and forgiving.

O Lord, you are good and forgiving, full of mercy to all who call to you.

Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer, and attend to my voice in supplication.

All the nations you have made shall come;

they will bow down before you, O Lord, and glorify your name,

for you are great and do marvellous deeds, you who alone are God.

You, O God, are compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, O Lord,
abundant in mercy and fidelity; turn and take pity on me.

Second reading

Romans 8:26-27

‘The Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.’

Brothers and Sisters: The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Gospel Acclamation

Cf. Matthew 11:25

Alleluia, alleluia.

I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,
you have revealed the secrets of the kingdom to little children.

Alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 13:24-43

‘Let both grow together until the harvest.’

At that time: Jesus put another parable before the crowd, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?” He said to them, “An enemy has done this.” So the servants said to him, “Then do you want us to go and gather them?” But he said, “No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, ‘Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’ ”

He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.’

He told them another parable. ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.’

All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet: ‘I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.’

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.’ He answered, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.’

Short reflection on the reading for today

There were people in Our Lord’s time who wanted him to separate the bad from the good as well. Among them were people who claimed the moral high ground, the Pharisees whose name means “the separated ones.” Even John the Baptist expected Jesus to separate the cream from the skim, to have only holy people around him. John foretold that Our Lord would separate the chaff from the wheat. He said (Mt 3:12) “He will gather his wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.” That’s precisely what Our Lord didn’t do. He had all sorts of people around him, a rainbow coalition of people, the learned, the ignorant, the good-living, the bad living, tax-collectors, prostitutes, the lot. What in God’s name is he doing, they said. Why doesn’t he get down to business? Why doesn’t he weed them out?

As any gardener knows, weeding can be the greatest threat of all to the life of the young seedling. At first, the problem is one of identifying which is which. The weeds must be left until the seedling can be clearly recognised. Even then, removing the weeds may pose an even greater threat. It might sever the seedling’s root system. Often the weed brings the seedling away with it.

The parable of the weeds is starkly simple and yet widely ignored. To the question “Do you want us to go and weed it out?” the answer of Jesus is a categorical “No.” And the reason is self-evident. Only God has eyes sufficiently discerning and fingers sufficiently gentle for this job. Weeding out is God’s prerogative. Life would be so much better for everybody, if only we would leave it to him.