

We can draw three lessons from today's readings that might help us in our daily lives. Jesus gives us a powerful way of understanding our lives in this world. Weeds grow among the wheat. Anyone who has gardened or farmed knows the phenomenon, and Jesus applies it to human living. The world is just such a mixture of good and evil. We all know people with a beautiful attitude to life, people who love and are generous, people who support others, who are cheerful in trials, who never complain or speak ill of others. These qualities are graces from God, and all of us have the task of cooperating with these kinds of graces so that during this life we gradually grow closer to God, more like his children, what Jesus calls the "children of the kingdom." But the good are often tangled up with the evil: folks who destroy innocent lives as we saw this past week, people who exploit others, people who refuse to come to the help of the poor. Our first lesson is that of perseverance. We have to cling to the good even as enemies of the good try to pull us and others away from God. We have to cling to the good, knowing that God is with us and good is destined to triumph over evil. That's what the resurrection of Jesus was all about. Evil no longer has the last word, it is destined to be burnt up in the fire and destroyed. Faith and perseverance in doing good have to be our standbys. The good that is now hidden and sometimes obscured by the evil, will one day shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

In our struggle to make our way among the weeds of the world, God gives us a thought that can accompany us, and this is our second lesson. He tells us in the Book of Wisdom that he's in charge of the world. He has power to administer justice in the world, particularly punishment of the unjust. But his might is so great that he can also show mercy, "clemency" says the reading. He can afford to wait for the wicked to turn back to him. Saint Benedict in his Rule for Monks says that our life on earth is lengthened a number of years to give us time to amend our behavior and turn it in a Godward direction before we die. God is patient with the wicked, giving them time to repent. And the reading says that he wants us to share that same attitude with respect to sinners. "You taught your people," says Wisdom, "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." So God both gives us time to weed out the evil in our own lives and to be patient with those still under the sway of "the evil one."

And there's a third lesson to be derived from our second reading, short as it was. Saint Paul says that the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, third person of the Trinity, dwells in the hearts of believers to pray in us. Often we don't know how to pray, what to pray for, what words to use. It doesn't matter: the Spirit of God prays in us, and God understands his language. The Spirit knows what to pray for, or rather what to—in Paul's words—groan for with inexpressible groanings. We and the Spirit groan in this world as we are surrounded by horrible evils whether in ourselves are in others or in the world at large. But the Spirit longs for the coming of the Father's kingdom, praying ardently for the coming of that kingdom, and we are invited to join in that prayer. That's what we are doing this very moment at Mass. We let the prayer of the Son of God, the prayer he prayed on the Cross—Your will be done, your kingdom come, deliver them from evil, may they all be one—we let that prayer which he prays in us at this sacrifice become our prayer. And it is a prayer which the Father must hear because he cannot refuse the prayer of his only Son.

Let us pray today ardently for the coming of the kingdom, in our own poor hearts, in the hearts of those we love, especially those who may have strayed from faith in Christ or are confused about the meaning of their lives, in the hearts of those who sow terror in the world. Let us be assured as we pray that the risen Christ is working in the world, below the surface, to prepare it as a place where God will live forever. May God give us the strength in this Eucharist to believe more deeply in the victory of the risen Christ and to proclaim that faith and that victory to the world in which we are called to be a leaven.