

Meditations: Saturday of the Sixteenth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the sixteenth week of Ordinary Time.

- We shouldn't be surprised by the presence of weeds
- Relying on our Lord's light
- Learning to look on others with patience

“SIR, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?” (*Mt 13:27*). These questions in a Gospel parable reflect the surprise of the servants who, after sowing the good seed, discover that weeds are also growing in the field. They are puzzled, and can’t understand where they came from. But they quickly realize that their master would not have allowed anything bad to come about. So they go to him to find out what has happened. The master’s answer is clear and forthright: “An enemy has done this” (*Mt 13:28*).

Later, when explaining this parable and others related to sowing, Jesus will make clear that the field can represent either the world or the human heart. We too can have the same question when we are surprised by the evil we encounter. Where do the bad inclinations we discover in our own heart and in the

world around us come from? Faced with this same concern, St. Josemaría remarked: “The world is not evil, because it has come from God’s hands, because it is his creation, because Yahweh looked upon it and saw that it was good. We ourselves, mankind, make it evil and ugly with our sins and infidelities.”^[1]

Seeing the presence of weeds in society or in ourselves, far from discouraging us, can help us to be humble and to trust more in God’s grace. Our own defects, when we fight against them, lead us to our Lord. He is not scandalized by the evil that may be present in our lives. Rather He encourages us to focus on the good in us and help it grow, and even to take advantage of the presence of weeds to strengthen our desire to serve Him. “Hence, when we experience any weakness in ourselves – or in others – we should not be surprised. Let us remember

all those who, in spite of their undeniable failings, persevered and carried the word of God to all nations and became saints. Let us resolve to fight and to keep going: what counts is perseverance.”^[2] —

THE GOOD disposition of the servants, even though they are late since they haven’t been vigilant enough, prompts them to take a decisive measure: to uproot the weeds. But before acting, they are prudent and decide to ask first: “Do you want us to go and gather them?” (Mt 13:28). Their master’s perspective is more far-reaching and he sees the difficulties that may arise in carrying this out: “No; lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them” (Mt 13:29).

It is not enough to want to get rid of the weeds. The energies unleashed when we perceive injustice and evil need to be channeled properly. Untimely and imprudent actions can lead us to hasty judgments that prevent us from recognizing the good seed, and thus uproot it along with the weeds. Hence we need to look into our own heart at the good and evil that may be growing there. “There is a good method for this: it is called an examination of conscience, which is seeing what happened today in my life, what struck my heart and which decisions I made. And this is precisely to verify, in the light of God, where the bad weeds and the good seed are.”^[3]

After an initial reaction, perhaps overly impetuous, the prudent thing is to turn to our Lord in our prayer and ask Him to help us understand what has happened in the light of his own perspective. We will seek his

advice and that of those who can help us. We can tell them what we intend to do and how we see the situation, while allowing them to suggest other points of view, as the master does in the parable: “Let both grow together until the harvest” (*Mt 13:30*).

THE PURPOSE of letting the wheat and the weeds grow together is not a question of calculation or laziness. Rather it is a question of perceiving the good as something that must be protected until it has matured, for often it isn’t easy to distinguish it from evil. “In the field of the Lord, that is, in the Church, sometimes what was wheat turns into weeds and what was weeds turns into wheat; and no one knows what will happen in the future. Therefore the master of the family did not allow his

indignant laborers to pull up the weeds; they wanted to pull them up, but he did not allow them to separate the weeds.”^[4]

The bad seed, in our daily life, can be more difficult to recognize when it looks like it is good. “The devil’s method is always to mix truth with error, covering it with the appearance and semblance of truth, so that it can easily seduce those who allow themselves to be deceived.”^[5]

The enemy will try to deceive us so that we focus on doing something that seems good, as long as it is not the seed that God wants to plant in us. And perhaps only when time has gone by and we see the consequences, do we realize that it has not produced the fruit we hoped for.

Therefore when we try to help someone, it is good to keep in mind that people don’t change from one

day to the next: we all need a look filled with understanding and affection to learn to distinguish the weeds and the wheat that grow simultaneously in our own lives. We can also learn from the effects of the bad seed – when we make mistakes – in order to decide with greater conviction to make the good seed grow and dedicate our noblest energies to doing good. “Patience is not only a need, it is a calling. If Christ is patient, then Christians are called to be patient. And this demands that we go against the tide with respect to today’s widespread mentality, dominated by rushing and by wanting ‘everything right away,’ in which, rather than waiting for situations to mature, people are put under pressure, in the expectation that they will change immediately. Let us not forget that rushing and impatience are enemies of spiritual life. Why? God is love, and those who love do not tire, they are not

irascible; they do not give ultimatums. God is patient, God knows how to wait.”^[6] Our Lady, as a good mother, will help us to understand that love is always patient and respects the pace of the progress others make.

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 114.

^[2] St. Josemaría, *Letter 2*, no. 48.

^[3] Francis, Angelus, 23 July 2023.

^[4] Saint Augustine, Sermon 73 A, 1.

^[5] St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on St. Matthew*, 46, 1.

^[6] Francis, Audience, 27 March 2024.

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