

**FR. JOHN'S HOMILY**  
**Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 19, 2020**

An elderly man named Tom asked the Pastor after a funeral, "Father, is everyone going to heaven?"

The Pastor replied, "Why do you ask Tom?"

Tom said, "It seems to me every funeral that I have been to lately, they all made it into heaven. Some of these men I knew were no saints, Father."

"Tom, neither are we so great as saints. Tom, do you know if they went to confession and asked for mercy?"

"No", Tom said.

"Do you know if they asked God for mercy on their death bed?"

Tom again replies, "No."

"Do you know if they tried to reach out to the people they hurt in their life and tried to make amends, before they died?"

For some reason I could tell that question got to Tom. "No" said Tom.

"So who is to judge this man or any one for that matter? It's certainly not you or me. Let's let God be the Judge."

Tom said, "I am glad God is God, and I am not."

I said, "Me too, Tom. I don't think I would have made your list either."

This moment took place some years ago, but judging others has been happening ever since the creation of men and women. There were people in Jesus' time who wanted him to separate the bad from the good. Among them were people who claimed the moral high ground. The Pharisees, whose name means "the separated ones," were one of these groups. Even John the Baptist expected Jesus-the

Messiah to have a separation of the righteous and unrighteous. John did not baptize anyone unless they showed some sign of their readiness and conversion. Again, remember John was getting hearts ready for Jesus.

Jesus does talk about some separation that takes place in the end times, like when He talks about the chaff from the wheat, sheep and the goats. “He will gather his wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.” (Mt 3:12) or “He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left”. (Mt 25:33)

We know there will be some separation at the end time. God is like a wise farmer, or wise shepherd, who knows how to decide the separation. However as we look to Jesus, we can ask who does he hang around? He had all sorts of people around him: the learned, the ignorant, the good-living, the bad living, tax-collectors, sick, lame, blind, lepers, prostitutes, and the like. We have to ask ourselves, what is God doing? People even judged Jesus for who his friends were and the company he kept. Why doesn't he weed them out?

As any gardener or farmer knows, weeding can be the greatest threat to his crops or garden and especially to 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 recognized. 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. This is what Jesus is referring to in the parable today.

In the case of human beings it is an even more risky business. “Weeding-out” has no history of success. I would like to repeat this, weeding out has no history of success, and yet there are still people who want to do this - weeding out of others.

Even after Hitler’s weeding out of the 6 million Jews, some 70 years later the Bosnian Serbs attempted the brutal policy of “ethnic cleansing,” and there are many other example as well. Too many examples. Weeding out is happening even today. Race, religion, color, sex, politics are still considered ways we use for identifying society’s weeds.

How about from the womb to the tomb? The unborn child, the seed of life, is threatened with abortion. At the other end of life, euthanasia is proposed as the final solution to get rid of the useless. We can see how dangerous these thoughts and actions can become. And how is it very much alive today, this weeding out.

Weeding out is not confined just to those who are in charge or have authority over our lives. We’re all tempted to try our hand at it. We are sharp at spotting the undesirables, the troublemakers, the misfits. This is all of us, young and old. One shudders to think of the people who might have been weeded out if God had not chosen to intervene. Probably most of the saints on our calendars would have never made it if left up to us.

I have a book that is called, *Saints Behaving Badly*. I like the title because it lets us know that many of our saints were bad people at first before coming to know Jesus and His love for them, forever changing their lives. Some of these great sinners to saints, are St. Dismas, St. Matthew, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Peter and

Paul, St. Augustine, list goes on and on. We just don't know who will be the great sinner or the saint in the end, only God knows.

If not, then think of Peter who after his triple denial of Jesus during the crucifixion crisis should have been weeded out for failing the leadership test. Paul would have never been brought into the community of believers because of his being a persecutor. Do you know who St. Dismas is? He is the condemned criminal that died with Jesus on Calvary. He is the one that asked Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom. Jesus says, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

Strange isn't it that Christ never weeded out Judas? Jesus is God, and He called the 12 to be His apostles. He knew Judas Iscariot and yet never told him to leave. He only told him at the Last Supper to leave and do what he must do according to the Scriptures. Why did Jesus not tell Judas to leave him earlier on in his three years with him? Maybe in Jesus there was always hope that Judas would not betray him. Or that Judas could have turned out like Peter, if he would have repented and accepted Jesus forgiveness.

One thing is for sure, we are not the best of judges. We are not so wise, so it is best if we learn to Let God be God. And we must learn to Wait, Wait, and Wait on the Lord. Wait till the end, and let God be the judge. As it states in Psalms 103, "Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger, abounding in mercy".

To the question in the Gospel today, "Do you want us to go and weed it out?" the answer from Jesus is "No." And the reason is clear. Only God has eyes to discern what a weed is and what is wheat. Weeding out is God's decision not ours.

Life would be so much better for everybody, if only we would leave the judging to God.

Back to Tom, and the Pastor, at the funeral. Yes this was me, and five years later, I was doing Toms' funeral. I told that story about Tom at his funeral Mass. I remember saying, "Now, Tom knows what he was really asking that day. Can God show mercy to me, can God forgive me, and can I be worthy to enter into heaven? Tom confessed his sins, repented, and tried to make amends the last years of his life to the people he hurt. Jesus' words to Dismas on the Cross; "Today you will be with me in Paradise", is now spoken to Tom. Don't we want to hear the same words from Jesus? Like Tom said, I am glad God is God and I am not. Aren't you glad God is God and you are not?"