

Column080419

Companions on the Journey

August 4, 2019

Dear Friends,

The summer often provides time for people to do some work in their gardens. My mom used to love to weed her garden. It is a commonplace. And Jesus used such simple images to teach people about God, life and how to live. Sometimes he just told stories. One of them is the story of the weeds growing in the field after good wheat had been sown there by the farmer. Once there is recognition that the weeds exist in the newly sown field there is consternation and an immediate desire to pull out the weed but the Master Storyteller reminds us that to do that might risk pulling up the wheat as well. So we are cautioned to be patient and to do our best to help the wheat grow into a bountiful harvest.

In a request from Jesus' disciples he explains the different symbols at work in the story. The seed are the good people. The weeds are the bad people. The evil sower is the devil and the good farmer is the Son of Man. The question though that we so often have is why does God allow the evil and the good to continue to grow together even though the battle has been ended and evil has been defeated. Why isn't every instance of evil just eliminated?

While we think we know that this is a good idea we may not actually understand all that such a desire implies. It is one thing if the field represents the world. But what if the field represents the Church. We continue to ask why doesn't the Lord just get rid of the bad people in the Church and then let the good people thrive? Well, who are the bad people? Is it that guy over there? Or them? What about me? Am I one of the bad people to be gotten rid of? But mostly I'm good, I think. But how does God see things? How does God see me? Am I one to be gotten rid of—because of my past sins? Or am I part of the "good" people group and therefore should be kept? Do you get the point? Wanting the "bad" weed people to go might actually cause me to go too.

Now suppose that the field doesn't represent the Church but it actually represents my soul. And the weeds are my sins and the wheat are the graces I cooperate with in the living of a virtuous life. What if I am in a bad patch right now and have lost my way? What if the Lord right then ordered me to rid my soul of all sin, no matter what? Might the whole virtuous side of me be put at risk if I overreacted or overstepped my boundaries? Could I risk losing the whole harvest for the sake of being rid of some weeds? That is the point here. Jesus says that we are to trust him that at the end he will take care of the weeds. All our effort is to be directed into becoming the best wheat we can be even if the weeds still have a negative impact on my life.

The point: Weeding isn't everything. There is a place for weeding but there are more important things for us to be about. Our effort, energy and attention must always be directed in becoming the best person I can be. I cannot do that without the help of God and the grace of God available in and through Jesus Christ. He is not alone. Neither are we. Worry less about the weeds in life and give more care to the wheat.

Peace,  
Msgr. McHenry