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Today's Word

The Sixteenth Sunday, Year A (19 July)

Parish Priest: Father Hiroshi Konishi

First Reading: The Book of Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

Second Reading: Letter to the Romans 8:26-27

Gospel Reading: The Gospel According to Matthew 13:24-30 (short form)

From the Three Readings

In the Gospel reading, three parables are read (the Parable of the Weeds, the Parable of the Mustard Seed, and the Parable of the Yeast). The image that comes to mind as a common thread running through these three parables is “growth.” The “Kingdom of Heaven” (“Kingdom of God”) grows within a person's heart. Even if it starts out very, very small—even if it is barely noticeable—it will surely grow. Even if it becomes mixed with weeds and the wheat is no longer visible, it will still continue to grow. God's presence, God's love, and God's grace all grow abundantly within the human heart.

In the First Reading, God is described as “the God who cares for all things” and “the One who cherishes all things.” God is at work in our daily lives. This work takes the form of caring for and paying close attention to each and every person. If we recognize God in this way, we need not be overcome with grief, as in the Second Reading, thinking, “I do not know how to pray.” Certainly, hardships and difficulties lie in wait in our daily lives. Yet God, who cares for each of us individually, dwells deep within our hearts as the “Spirit.” And the “Spirit” Himself, suffering alongside us who are in pain and “groaning,” guides us toward God in heaven.

Let's reflect on the Gospel reading while paying close attention to the words. First, let's focus on the word “brought forth” in verse 24: “Jesus told them another parable.”

The original meaning of this word is “to place before.” The Franciscan translation, which renders it as “Jesus presented another parable and said,” is more faithful to the nuance of the original text. As it says in *Exodus* (Chapter 19, Verse 7), “Moses returned and gathered the elders of the people, and presented to them all these words that the Lord had commanded.” As the new Moses, Jesus places God's word before the people and presents it to them. However, whether or not people accept it is up to them. Those who accept it become Jesus' “disciples,” while those who do not remain part of the “crowd.”

Next, regarding the “tares” in verse 25, tares are plants that resemble wheat (mimetic plants). When young, they are difficult to distinguish from wheat, and since their roots are intertwined with those of the wheat, attempting to pull out the tares risks pulling up the wheat as well.

Wheat produces ears of grain, but tares do not.

Finally, please pay attention to Jesus' words in verse 30: "Let both grow together."

In the explanation of the parable (verses 34-43), the parable of the tares seems to be viewed from the perspective of the "judgment at the end of the age." However, if we reflect on verse 30 alone, the message "Do not judge now" resonates deeply in our hearts. It is God Himself who judges. It is impossible for human eyes to discern whether something is truly good wheat or tares. Even if something appears to be tares to human eyes, it does not necessarily appear the same way to God's eyes.

People known as sinners gathered around Jesus. The mention of tares mixed in may have been a critique of the presence of sinners.