

Gospel text
Matthew 13: 24-43

24 Jesus offered them another story from life: "The world of God can be compared to a man who has spread good seed in his field. 25 While the people were asleep, his enemy came and sowed wheatgrass in the middle of the wheat, then left. 26 When the grass had grown and produced its fruit, quackgrass also appeared. 27 Then the servants of the master of the house went to him and said to him, "Mister, have you not spread good seed in your field? How is it that quackgrass is found there?" 28 He answered them, "It was an enemy who did this." Then the servants asked him, "Do you want us to pick it up?" 29 He said to them, "No, lest you pick up the wheatgrass, you will uproot the wheat with it. 30 Let them both grow together until the harvest. And at the time of the harvest, I will say to the harvesters: "First collect the quackgrass and bind it in bundles to burn it completely, then collect the wheat in my barn."

31 Jesus offered them another comparison: "The world of God is like a mustard seed that a man takes and sows in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it begins to grow, it is larger than vegetable plants and becomes a tree, to the point where the birds of the air come to nest on its branches."

33 He spoke to them again in a figuratively way: "The world of God is like leaven that a woman takes and bury in three measures of flour, until everything has risen."

34 Jesus told all these things in the form of a comparison, and he did not speak to them otherwise than in this way, 35 which enabled one to reach the complete understanding of what was already said by the prophet:

I will open my mouth to say figurative words, I will proclaim things that have been hidden since the beginning of the world. 36 After he sent the people away, he went home. The disciples approached him to ask: "Explain the enigmatic story of quackgrass in the field." 37 He answered them, "He who spreads the good seed is the new Adam. 38 The field is the land of men. The good seed is people who live in the domain of God. Quackgrass is the people who live in the realm of evil. 39 The enemy who spreads it is the adverse desires. The harvest is the end of the world, the harvesters are the messengers of God. 40 So just as we pick up quackgrass and put it on fire, so will it be at the end of the world. 41 The new Adam will send his messengers to remove from his domain all the sources of evil and all those who commit all kinds of injustice, 42 and will throw them into a huge blaze; there will be the tears of remorse and the gnashing of teeth from rage. 43 At the same time, the righteous will be radiant like the sun in the domain of their Father. Let him who has ears pay attention.

Gospel commentary - Homily

Warning to the impatient!

The Arab world has been in turmoil for some time. It started with Tunisia where a man committed suicide by fire when his only source of income, the sale of fruit in the street, was ended. It was enough to start a popular movement of dissatisfaction that overthrew the government. The popular movement continued in Egypt, then in Yemen, then in Bahrain, then in Libya, then in Syria. Where will it end? The majority of people were surprised; nothing let anyone to foresee this movement. It's like coming out of nowhere. Really? The fire had certainly been brewing for a few years, but nothing was apparent. Then suddenly, the force held back for several years came to light. It is a similar image that the Gospel of this day offers us when Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God.

We have three parables concerning the reign of God, but three parables with completely different emphasis. In the first, the emphasis is on the fact that the presence of evil in the world, represented by quackgrass, should not prevent us from believing that God is in action and that the forces of life are spreading, because the complete elimination of evil will only happen at the end of time, ie not in our lifetime. In the second, the emphasis is on the fact that there is no common measure between the actions of life that we are taking now, and the end result that we will probably never be able to measure, as was the case for Jesus; indeed, the latter tried to gather the Jewish people in unity, but it was the entire universe that he pulled together, a fact symbolized by the birds that nest in the branches of the tree. In the third, the emphasis is on the fact that life forces often remain a hidden reality, which cannot be seen with the naked eye, but that nevertheless, in a mysterious way, they succeed in transforming everything.

These three parables, which Matthew grouped together in a discourse on Jesus, describe aspects of the kingdom of God in three different ways. It is important to note here that what was at the core of Jesus' preaching and his action was not a message of love, even if love colors everything he says and does, but rather, it is this mysterious reality of the kingdom of God. It is the conviction that this reign of God is both imminent and at the same time already at work which leads him to quit his job as a carpenter in Nazareth, to be baptized by John the Baptist, and to go through the whole country by urgently inviting people to change their lives. For him, all the healing he did were a sign that this reign was already mysteriously present, a sign of the victory of life over death. But this reign of God needs first to be welcome. I really means: welcome, because most of the work is done by God; our role is simply to plant the seed, God takes care of the rest. But how can we speak of a reality that we cannot directly see or touch? This is the purpose of the three parables.

I want to warn you right away. There are people who see in the ending of today's Gospel a description and confirmation of hell, when angels throw those who commit evil into a furnace of fire. First of all, this scene where the disciples request an explanation of the parable is an allegory, ie a symbolic and pictorial interpretation by the first Christians (the scene takes place

in a house called "home", symbol of the Church) where they gave a specific meaning to each item of the original parable of the sower; therefore it does not come from Jesus. Also, we are in an agricultural world: it is normal to burn what is useless.

Today's Gospel is for the impatient like you and me. I am the grandfather of an eight-month-old daughter, and I do not understand why she does not speak or walk yet.

The international community will make great military and diplomatic efforts to resolve the Arab crisis as quickly as possible, perhaps to become frustrated that true liberation is taking an enormous amount of time.

Many Christians cannot take it anymore from a Church which seems to belong to another century.

What do the three parables say together? We will have to learn to live in a hybrid world, where good and bad coexist, and therefore dare to sow life knowing that someone else sows death; we will have to believe that it is enough for us simply to make a single small gesture of life, like that of sowing, and that God takes care of the rest, i.e. the sun, the rain and the forces of growth; it is normal for life forces to have a very humble start; one should not be confused because one has the impression that nothing is happening, because one cannot control progress. The three parables have this in common: the rhythm of life is not made for the impatient, and because it is not necessarily visible and apparent, it requires faith.

The three parables talk about our everyday life, our relationships with our spouse, our children and our parents, our work colleagues and our fellow citizens around the world. At any moment, we can take the road of life or death. But the road to life necessarily requires faith. Because how would I continue on this road if I have the impression of being alone and not immediately seeing the results?

-André Gilbert, Gatineau, April 2011