

Dear Friends,

Have you ever encountered office politics, gossip or rumors? I imagine you have. Sometimes people don't always act with the best of intentions. Instead of living by "Do unto others what you would want them to do to you," it can be "Do to others before they do it to you." Rumors, gossip, politics don't just occur at work, of course; they can occur everywhere, sometimes damaging a person's reputation. When you hear a rumor or gossip, how do you respond? How have you responded?

For a second Sunday our gospel presents us with parables. One of those parables – like last Sunday's - consists of seeds and growth; and once again Jesus is determined to help his disciples understand how the kingdom grows. Today's central parable concerns weeds among wheat.

The scene Jesus describes in the first parable would have been familiar to his listeners. Palestinian farmers were beset by tare, weeds that were difficult to distinguish from good grain. In the early stages of their growth tares so closely resembled wheat that it was almost impossible to distinguish one from the other. It was only when both began forming heads that it became easy to distinguish them; by that time, though, their roots were intertwined. The two, then, grew together until the harvest. At harvest they had to be separated because the grain of the tare was slightly poisonous and could cause dizziness and sickness if left with the wheat. In the end it was usually separated by hand. By way of the parable Jesus taught his listeners that God is more concerned with the growth of the wheat than with the elimination of the weeds. The time for separation and burning will come in God's time; concern needs to center on one's faithfulness.

Hearing the parable we may first think of good people (the wheat) and bad people (the weeds) existing together in an imperfect world until the coming of God's kingdom. At second thought, though, doesn't every person possess something of both the "good" wheat and "evil" weed in them? Don't each of us possess the ability to do the right thing, the just thing, the compassionate thing while at the same time have the ability to do hurtful, destructive things out of selfishness, fear or greed? Discipleship recognizes the struggles that exist within each of us but also embraces the hope that, in seeking to imitate Jesus, we may be like good wheat for a world that is often choked by bad weeds.

As we journey into each day of this week, may we reflect upon the gift of faith sown in our lives and seek ways to allow our faith to influence our actions.

Peace and blessings,
Father John