

**July 23, 2017 Imperfection Homily:** Brothers and sisters, every so often a consumer, while shopping in a store, sees an item of merchandise drastically reduced in price, a mere fraction of its true value. And the reason for the mark down? The product has a slight defect, a minor flaw. It may be a dent, scratch, nick or chip. If the product was badly damaged, it would have been discarded. The product has not lost its value completely. Indeed, a skilled craftsman could restore the product to its original beauty (a chair, desk, table, bookcase, etc.) and perfection. He sees great potential in the "imperfect" item on sale. However, one must be patient!

In today's gospel (Mt.13:24-30), the account of the parable of the wheat and the weeds, Our Lord is teaching his disciples about the greatest of mysteries: the kingdom of heaven. In doing so, he is also affording his listeners a vivid description of the community he came to establish, the Church. The church is a mixed crop of saints and sinners, righteous and unrighteous. All of whom stand under God's judgment and mercy. Fr. George Rutler, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, accentuates this perspective by pointing to the piety of Muslim weavers, who are of the Islamic faith. The devout Muslim intentionally weaves a discordant thread into every rug he crafts in order to avoid the sin of blasphemy. The Muslim believes only Allah (God) is perfect. The Muslim makes no pretense of achieving perfection. Seeking perfection in this life is, at best, delusional, and, at worst, a grave offense to the deity.

It is worth noting that the slaves make an appeal to their master to purge the field of all the weeds (Mt.13:27). The owner advises them to be patient and allow the wheat and weeds to grow together. There will always be the weeds of the unchristian next to the good wheat sown by Christ. The servants must learn the values of compassion and patience as they await the harvest. In his profound reflections on today's gospel, the erstwhile Pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI, spoke of the "temptation of impatience". To insist on immediately finding great success and large numbers, he wrote is not God's way.

Since the gospel is the "Good News", it is not surprising that the time of the harvest will be a time of richness and plenitude, not destruction (Mt.13:30). The parable of the wheat and the weeds conveys a message of hope. As long as the kingdom is growing, it remains possible for the weeds to change into wheat until the time of the harvest. In the eventuality of seeing a damaged piece of merchandise on sale, you may want to recall today's parable and see yourself as that product. The Master Craftsman has not ceased to care for us.

He is patiently preparing us for a heavenly feast in which the wheat sown in this life may bear lasting fruit in eternity.

Amen!