

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY  
IN  
ORDINARY TIME  
  
YEAR A



**Prayer**

*Psalm 86:5–6, 9–10, 15–16*

For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.

Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my cry of supplication.

All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant; save the child of your serving girl.

**Reading the Word**

*Wisdom of Solomon*

*12:13, 16–19*

For neither is there any god besides you, whose care is for all people, to whom you should prove that you have not judged unjustly;

For your strength is the source of righteousness, and your sovereignty over all causes you to spare all.

For you show your strength when people doubt the completeness of your power, and you rebuke any insolence among those who know it.

Although you are sovereign in strength, you judge with mildness, and with great forbearance you govern us; for you have power to act whenever you choose.

Through such works you have taught your people that the righteous must be kind, and you have filled your children with good hope, because you give repentance for sins.

*Romans 8:26–27*

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

FIRST READING

Wisdom of Solomon  
12:13, 16–19

PSALM

Psalm 86:5–6, 9–10, 15–16

SECOND READING

Romans 8:26–27

GOSPEL

Matthew 13:24–30

*Matthew 13:24–30*

Jesus put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well.

And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’

But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’ ”

*Scripture quotations from  
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## Hearing the Word

### "God's Patience"

The world is not a perfect place, and neither is the Christian community. Some question why God allows trouble-makers, the unrighteous and the wicked to exist, and negatively affect others and the world. Today's liturgy answers this question by pointing out God's patience.

In the final part of the book of Wisdom, its author reflects on the various ways in which God's wisdom operated in the history of Israel. He focuses on the event of Exodus and the subsequent journey of the Israelites through the desert towards the promised land. Once there, the chosen people encountered the land's native inhabitants, the Canaanites, who, unaware of God's ways, lived in wickedness committing such crimes as sacrificing children and eating human flesh (cf. Wis 12:3-5). Their wrongdoing was the direct reason for God's decision to give their country to his faithful people. As a result of their estrangement from God, they were to lose their land. This difficult message, however, is not left without further comment and explanation.

First, the author affirms that God has the autonomy and authority to act as he wills; God does not have to explain his actions and judgments to anyone, and there is no God besides him. Yet, God does not take delight in displaying his powers and does not use his strength capriciously. He acts

with righteousness, and uses his overwhelming power only when people doubt, reject, or question his authority as the one true God. Second, although sovereign over all creation, God acts with moderation. The author states that "although you are sovereign in strength, you judge with mildness, and with great forbearance you govern us". Restraint and moderation in the use of the absolute power reveals a patient and kind God, who is neither capricious nor vicious. Furthermore, God's gentleness and patience extends even to the wicked inhabitants of the land (cf. Wis 12:8-12). Instead of destroying them suddenly and utterly with a single blow, God is lenient, giving them both the time and the possibility to come to recognize him as the true God, and to amend their wicked ways (cf. Wis 2:20). The author concludes that God's leniency and patience with the wicked is a lesson for the righteous. Like God, they must treat each other with patience, meditating on God's mercy and patience (cf. Wis 12:22).

The second reading of the last Sunday referred to the longing for the fullness of life which awaits the faithful in eternity. Paul continues this reflection in today's reading stating that "in hope we were saved" (Rom 8:24). Being saved "in hope" means that salvation has already been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus. However,

its completion still lies in the future, because not all of its effects are now felt and visible. There is still sin, death and evil to confront, before the salvation process will be completed at Christ's parousia. Christians are on the way towards that completion, but they are not there yet, which Paul acknowledges, writing, "if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (Rom 8:25).

This situation leads the apostle to look again at the Holy Spirit and the role the Spirit plays. He states that the Spirit helps the faithful in their weakness. Weakness is a fair description of the human experience in the present world, where mortal bodies are subject to sin, decay and death. One aspect of this weakness is the inability to pray, that is, the difficulty with coming into and maintaining close contact with God. In this situation of weakness and isolation from God, the Spirit comes to help through intercession with "sighs too deep for words". Paul refers here to the Spirit's work within the innermost part of a human being which makes his or her prayer, though at times inarticulate, effective and powerful. This prayer is effective because the Spirit, knowing God intimately, aligns the prayer of the faithful with God's will. And God, who knows the Spirit intimately, approves this prayer, since it is delivered according to his own will.

This, somewhat complicated argument makes a simple point – God himself enables the faithful to pray effectively through the action of his Spirit. God knows fully well that human beings are burdened and isolated from him because of their earthly limitations and weaknesses. Yet, being ever patient, God sends the Spirit to draw them to himself in prayer as they patiently wait for the fullness of salvation. Instead of being frustrated with human infirmity, God patiently reaches towards his creatures, accompanying them on the long journey towards heaven. In the Gospel, we read yet another parable which utilizes the agricultural setting. Similarly to the parable of the sower from last Sunday, the main attention of today's parable rests on the seed being sown. However, in this story there is only one soil, while the difference lies in the seed. There are only two kinds of seeds (wheat and weeds), two sowers (the master and the enemy), and two possible responses of the householder (letting everything grow or destroying the weeds). The householder sows the good seed which becomes nourishing wheat, while the enemy sows bad seed which grows into destructive weeds. The result is a mixed field of good and bad plants. Still the householder – God – does not permit the early destruction of the useless weeds, but commands that separation of the two kinds of plants should

wait until the final harvest. God allows his field to be a mixed assembly of the good and the bad.

The parable applies to and illustrates the situation of the Matthean community and, in fact, every Christian community ever since. All human communities, including Christian communities, are a mixed collection of the good and the wicked, the kind and the arrogant, the helpful and the harmful. The parable teaches its hearers that God allows and tolerates such a situation, at least for the time being. The reason for such tolerance is to give a chance for change and repentance to those who require it. The righteous must accept this state of affairs and be patient, imitating God's patience, in order to give the chance for the wicked to amend their ways and be transformed from the useless and harmful weeds into nourishing wheat. Today's liturgy describes a patient God. The author of the book of Wisdom teaches that, despite his unlimited power and sovereignty, God acts with patience and moderation, even towards his enemies. Paul points to God's patience with human limitations, while God also helps his faithful to remain in union with himself, by sending the Holy Spirit to sustain them in prayer. The evangelist Matthew explains that the Christian community contains the good, the wicked and all in-between these two opposites, because God wishes that

all should coexist till the end. The common theme that runs through all today's reading is that of God's patience with the wicked, aimed at providing the possibility for repentance. God is patient so that the "weeds" might become more like "wheat". The psalmist understood this well when he described God as "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness".

### **Listening to the Word of God**

Today's liturgy summons us to reflect on the theme of God's patience and tolerance towards us. Jesus saw fit to use parables to put across the message about the Kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is prepared for all people, because God created every human being in his own image and likeness. God desires that everyone be saved and live with Him eternally. However, everyone is free either to accept his invitation or not. Still, this seemingly obvious choice does not come easily and is often difficult to make. The good news is that God is willing to wait for our response. A few points will help us to absorb the message about God's patience.

In most traditional societies, teachers and elders use proverbs, stories and parables as means of teaching, convincing, and, above all, giving advice, and communicating their wisdom. Jesus also used a parable of wheat and weeds coexisting in one field to make us understand that God waits patiently for sinners to come



to their senses and make amends, in order to be fruitful like wheat, and not useless and harmful like the weeds. God created us in his image and likeness, he continues to extend his unconditional love to each one of us. As we live in an imperfect world, and we ourselves are imperfect, God is a patient sower who continues to sow his seed in our hearts through his Word.

However, there is another "sower", one who sows the bad seed to transform us into harmful weeds. Our hearts are like the field in which both of these seeds grow. While we will never be completely rid of the weeds within us, we have to be able to cultivate those seeds which will make such fruits as love, peace, joy and self-control. We have the power to keep on "watering" and nurturing those good seeds so that they grow faster and taller than the bad seed, and overshadow the bad plants and fruits our heart produces.

In today's parable, Jesus urges us to be cautious when it comes to judgment, punishment and exclusion. Its core message is that it is God's business to know who is in or out of his kingdom. We do not know or decide who will be saved and enter heaven. It is beyond us to determine how God judges the good and the wicked, or whether they will be welcomed or rejected. God's example teaches us the patience that we need to show in dealing with others.

All too often we make hasty moves, judging this or that person to be bad seed, without the proper understanding of the bigger picture of life

and history. There is a huge difference between condemnation and calling for responsibility. As Christians we certainly cannot be indifferent in face of wrongs and evil in our midst, but, at the same time we need to be patient and tolerant. To be patient like God, therefore, means patience with others but also with ourselves, and not allowing our weaknesses to overcome and depress us.

### Proverb

Do not  
blame God  
for having  
created  
the tiger  
but thank  
him for not  
having given  
it wings.

### Action

#### Self-examination

What are the weakness and faults in myself that I dislike most? Am I patient enough not to allow these to depress and dominate me?

How do I think about and respond to the wrongdoers in my community?

### Response to God

I make a personal commitment that in the coming days I will be patient and accepting of my own weaknesses, and that of those who make me angry and upset.

### Response to your World

I will purify my heart by purging judgments and condemnatory thoughts from my mind, and showing patient and kind attitude to those who dislike me or respond negatively to me.

As a group, we think of the situation or people we need to be patient with. How are we going to respond to them in order to show both patience and resolve to correct the wrongs?

### Prayer

Merciful and gracious God, we thank you for forgiving us our sins and being patient with us. Your care and abounding steadfast love extends to all human beings, good and evil ones alike.

Grant us the Holy Spirit so that we may be patient and tolerant with one another and may the Spirit guide us to walk along the path to your kingdom.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.