

This summer just after Easter about 30 priests of this diocese had to go for their retreat to Ars, France, but could not go due to Covid 19. A few years ago, I had the opportunity to make my retreat at Ars, France where St. John Mary Vianney was the pastor.

One person who appeared to be like weeds in many ways was St. John Mary Vianney. born near Lyons in 1786 in France. He was so poor in studies that nobody ever thought that he would be able to complete the studies required to be ordained those days. Everyone in his class ridiculed him and considered him useless like weeds. But he became the most famous Pastor or Parish Priest in France since he later became the Curé of Ars and got canonized. His incorruptible body is still kept in the same church where he served. History of Christianity is filled with such examples of saints, who were considered weeds but later became wheat. St. Augustine, St. Paul etc.

Main theme of this Sunday's reading is about compassionate, patient and loving God who allows both the wheat and the weeds to grow together in the hope that so-called weeds may get converted.

In order to explain this mystery Jesus uses another parable connected with the farming which was very easy for the Jews to understand.

Anyone with some knowledge of farming or gardening knows, that pulling out the weeds can be very harmful for all the young seedlings. At first, the problem is one of identifying which is which. In our rice fields in India, we get a kind of weeds which looks exactly like rice plants, it is next to impossible to identify them until they start to have grains. So, these weeds are removed during harvest time only. Another problem is pulling out the weeds at young stage may damage an intertwined root system.

During the time of Jesus, people like pharisees and Sadducees wanted him to separate the bad from the good. Even some of his disciples expected Jesus to separate the cream from the skim, to have only holy people around him. That is precisely what Our Lord didn't do. He had all sorts of people around him, a rainbow coalition of people, the learned, the ignorant, the good-living, the bad-living, tax-collectors, prostitutes, the lot. What in God's name is he doing, they said? Why doesn't he get down to business? Why doesn't he weed them out?

With this parable Jesus answers their questions.

The Scripture Readings of today speak about the goodness of God and his forgiving love. He allows both good and bad to grow together.

In the First Reading of today from the Book of Wisdom speaks of the Lord as all-powerful, merciful, and just. Despite His divine power that could simply crush all evil, He permits the sinner to survive with an eye to the possibility of repentance.

In the Gospel Jesus teaches about the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven. He tells us. God the sower of good seed allows bad seed as well as good to grow till harvest time and then He will deal with good and bad on their merit.

The parable of the weeds is starkly simple and yet widely ignored. It was the slaves who judged the weed to be bad and wanted to pull them out. But the master categorically said “NO”. The owner surprisingly says no and mandates that they should be left to grow together. Judgment will be rendered at the end and then only by the owner and not the slaves.

To the question “Do you want us to go and weed it out?” the answer of Jesus is a categorical “No.”

And the reason is self-evident. Only God has eyes sufficiently discerning and fingers sufficiently gentle for this job. Weeding out is God’s prerogative. Life would be so much better for everybody, if only we would leave it to him.

Unfortunately, it is not so. Although the God allows the good and bad to grow together, some people try to play greater role than God in weeding out other human beings.

Under Hitler Nazi Germany tried to weed out six million Jews in concentration camps in the name of ethnic cleansing. Even today, race, religion, color, sex, politics are considered basis for identifying society’s weeds.

Today thousands and thousands of mothers consider their unborn babies as weeds. And we know to these millions of helpless unborn babies.

Similarly, Racism in this country is a type of the weeding out. People with a different color or background are considered weeds to be up rooted. In India, Christians and Muslims are considered weeds by the majority. Females are considered as weeds in India’s male chauvinist society.

So, we human beings try to weed out other human beings whereas the loving God allows both to grow together till the harvest time.

In view of the recent events of some statutes and religious houses being vandalized by the protesters, Supreme Knight Mr. Carl A. Anderson of the Knights of Columbus, in his message to all members said, “The Knights of Columbus remains firm in its condemnation of all forms of racism and violence, including political violence.”

How do you deal with the weeds? Do you consider other people who are different from you as weeds and want to weed them out? It is better to uproot the weeds of sins in your personal life than trying to weed out the society.