

FR HUGH'S HOMILY FOR 16th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

I'm no farmer, and certainly no horticulturalist, or even gardener. I pretend to believe in 'wilding' and leave the patch of ground behind the church, we call our garden, to its own devices. Flowers and weeds battle it out.

But two very kind women have appeared and with a lot of TLC and taken it in hand. With a bit of tending, the flowers can now be seen and even new ones suddenly appear. The weeds are more under control if not gone. A little bit of love and you get a transformation.

Now in our gospel Jesus pictures the world as a much bigger field. And he has sown goodness, us and all creation, for a perfect harvest.

However, what Jesus has seen, and it can be seen by us too, is that, however you want to call the evil sower, someone/thing has deliberately ruined the perfect harvest. In the gospel in the original Greek, what are sown are not just weeds but something that attacks the wheat far more insidiously and damagingly.

The perfect harvest is the fulfilment of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. But on the journey to that, (and the kingdom is a journey), there is a struggle to be faced.

Many cultures have acknowledged this in their myths and legends. Babylonians and Gilgamesh's travels, The Greeks and their stories of tasks to be fulfilled, beating many challenges on the way, Jason and the Argonauts for one, (Hollywood's version with Kirk Douglas, often on the TV). But Jesus has brought this struggle and its answer into the light for us.

And no longer in story form, I believe we can clearly see this struggle in our world, war v. peace, unjust wealth v. poverty, corruption v. justice, and so on.

The readings give us hope though. Firstly in the first reading and the psalm, with those who damage the kingdom, God has infinite forgiveness. God believes that even those represented by the weeds can be changed. And secondly in the gospel the message Jesus also brings is that God has infinite patience. Wait he says. They can change before the harvest.

Sometimes we lose hope in this. The good always seems to be losing to evil, the bad. But that second reading, a beautiful passage from chapter 8 of the letter to the Romans, says, even when we are struggling and find it hard to pray, and our faith in God is weakening, the Spirit will always lift our prayer to God, who sees all that we hope for. The Spirit is our advocate, who speaks for us and gives us hope. And in response to the Spirit's request, God's infinite grace will always come down on us and give us strength. God's TLC.