

This Week's Readings – the 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time – The themes of today's readings are patience and leniency. The first reading is from the Book of Wisdom, which is part of the Deutero-Canonical (Second Canon) Books of the Bible, which are only recognized by the Catholic Church. It was written in Greek approximately 100 years or less before the birth of Christ. The author, who is unknown, was most probably a Greek Jew living in Alexandria, Egypt. At times, he takes on the persona of Solomon (7:5, 8:21, and 9:7). This was done primarily because Solomon was regarded as the wisest King of Israel. Thus, this book is sometimes referred to as the Wisdom of Solomon. At this time, especially in Alexandria, many Jews had been assimilated into the predominant pagan culture. The Book of Wisdom was written as a "wake-up call" to those Jews. This particular section, which is called "A Digression on God's Mercy" describes God as a just and righteous God, not one to be feared. Note that this section is addressed directly to God. The God of Israel is so powerful that He does not have to resort to violence and retribution as the pagan gods. This is a merciful and just God who "permits repentance" for the sins of the people. This message is further carried forth in the passage from Matthew's Gospel. This is a continuation of last week's Gospel and basically follows the same format as last week's Gospel. Here we read the very familiar parable of the sower (Jesus), who sows good seed but who is sabotaged by one (Satan) who sows weeds in his field. This parable is found only in Matthew. The weed referred to here is dandelion, which is poisonous. It also resembles wheat in its early stages of development - deception. Again, Jesus is the sower who spreads the Word of the Kingdom of Heaven. The wheat represents those who are good and the weeds, not only represent those who are bad but also those who influence others to sin. Therefore, the weeds are not removed, lest they damage the wheat - patience. At harvest (the End Time), the wheat and the weeds will be separated and the weeds burned. Jesus' lesson is this – there will always be good people and bad people. However, only God, not us, can judge who is good and who is evil. Then there are those who repent their sins – weeds are not always bad. Remember that Jesus preached primarily to those in need of repentance. This demonstrates not only God's patience and leniency but also His justice and forbearance. Why does Jesus use so many different parables to describe "The Kingdom of Heaven"? Fr. Roger Karban in his 2005 syndicated column for *The Evangelist* explains – "The Gospels clearly teach that Jesus had problems trying to convey His ideas about God present and working in our lives. (He usually refers to that divine event as the "kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of heaven.") It still isn't an easy concept for us to appreciate 2,000 years later. We know God's here among us, but we don't always mesh our ideas on the subject with those of Jesus. Our ideas probably come not so much from Scripture as from a sermon we once heard, or a question and answer we memorized in a long past catechism class".

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For the expanded article, go to <http://stjulies.org/content/homilies-reflections>