

**LET BOTH OF THEM GROW TOGETHER UNTIL THE HARVEST - Biblical
Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM**

Matthew 13,24-43

He 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.’”

He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

“I will open my mouth to speak in parables;

I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.”

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

In Matthew's gospel there are not only the temptations that Jesus suffered, but there are also the possible temptations that the community of believers are exposed to at all times. In chapter 13, we find three parables, with the answers to three possible temptations: they are the parables of the Kingdom. It is Jesus who speaks to his disciples, exposes these parables of the Kingdom of heaven, Remember that this expression is typical of Matthew, but indicates the Kingdom of God, that is, the alternative society where, instead of accumulating for oneself, one generously shares with others and where instead of commanding, you serve. This is the kingdom of heaven.

The first temptation to which the community is subjected to at all times is the temptation of

to be a community of elect, a community of superior people, and therefore seeking to eliminate others. Jesus responds to this temptation with the parable, that of the sower and the weeds. Jesus says that: “*..while everybody was asleep, an enemy came ..*” God’s enemy “*..and sowed weeds..*” weeds are toxic seeds, “*..among the wheat, ..*” But more harmful than the harmful seed of the weeds, are the servants, the zealous servants. In fact, “Then the servants went to the landlord and they said to him: ‘*Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?*’ and they themselves proposed ‘*Then do you want us to go and gather them?*’. And in the parable the master of the field prevents him, he saying: ‘*No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them.*’ Their action, that of zealous servants, is more dangerous than the weeds. So Jesus says no to a community of elect only, this is the temptation that ecclesial groups often suffer, in which everyone feels they have the only response to the way of life of the message of Jesus, and for this they snub or condition the life of others. Jesus does not agree with this, therefore no temptation to be a community of elect

The second temptation that the community suffers, is seen all through the gospel, is that of the mania of greatness, then Jesus continues, saying: “*He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a..*” To understand this parable one must refer to the prophet Ezekiel. In the prophet Ezekiel chapter 17,22 where the future kingdom was imagined, like a cedar, we know that the cedar is called the king of trees, and it was planted on a high mountain. So something extraordinary, something that immediately attracts attention and admiration for its splendour. Jesus says nothing like this “*The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed...*” it is strange that Jesus speaks of sowing, because mustard seeds are not sown, “*..in his field;*” Jesus comments that “*.. it is the smallest of all the seeds,..*” mustard is a weed; its seeds, which are microscopic, very small, with the wind arrive everywhere, for this reason it is not sown, but is feared by Palestinian farmers. So it's small, but it gets everywhere: this is Jesus’ message : *it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree,..*” what does Jesus want to say ? That the Kingdom of heaven, that is, the Kingdom of God, even in its moment of maximum splendor, will not attract attention; the mustard plant is a shrub that, in favorable areas, such as the lake of Galilee, reaches two or three meters, but is a common plant that does not attract any attention. Well for Jesus, the Kingdom of God, in the moment of its maximum development, will not attract attention for its greatness, for its wonder, but as a weed, it will arrive everywhere.

\ The third and final temptation is that of discouragement. The Christian community is small and there is a lot of work to do, and there is a risk of discouragement. Then Jesus, for this temptation, says another parable: “*The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour..*” three measures of flour are forty kilos, it's a bit much for a home. Why this reference to forty kilos? Because in the Old Testament, this quantity of measure appears in relation to the episodes of Abraham and Sarah, of Gideon and Anna, the mother of the prophet Samuel, always on the occasion of the fulfillment of the promises of God to the people, even in circumstances that seemed impossible. Then he says: this yeast is “*..mixed in until all of it was leavened.*” the Christian community must not be frightened by the enormity of the work, but must mix with the existing reality and then transform it, and Jesus guarantees it. Well, of the three parables, the only one that the disciples ask in a peremptory way, even imperative to explain, is the one that, it is not that they did not understand it, perhaps it is the only one that they do understand,

but on which they are not of agreement. So, “.. *into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us ..”* and they say it with authority “..*the parable of the weeds of the field.*” So this parable in which Jesus denies the temptation to be a community of elect, a community of superiors with respect to others, this is not accepted by the community of disciples. Well Jesus explains, in this remainder of the parable, that it is individuals who judge themselves, choosing what to be: either to be wheat, bread that feeds, blessing for others, or to be weeds, a junkie who poisons and gives death . So three temptations to which the communities of all times can be subjected, but with the certainty, with the guarantee, that the message of Jesus will be fulfilled despite everything, despite the lack of terms.