

Wheat and weeds

There's an old story about a college student returning home for summer. His mom asked him to come to Mass with her on Sunday.

Tired of her pleading, he snapped: "Mom, I'm not going anymore. Besides, the people in church are just a bunch of hypocrites anyway."

His mom replied: "All the more reason to come with me. The more the merrier! With you, there will be one more there!"

I'm not sure that was the answer he expected. Nor am I quite certain it got him to church. But it was a very good answer.

Few of us are 100% of what we claim to be. None of us are really what we appear to be.

Farmers in Jesus' time knew exactly what kinds of crops were growing in their fields. Their lives depended on it. One field yielded oats. Another field produced barley. Still another brought forth corn.

When it came to growing wheat, things got trickier. You see, there was this pesky weed called Bearded Darnel that looked just like wheat. What's more, it would entangle its roots around wheat. Savvy farmers knew that the wheat and weeds could only be determined at harvest time.

The point of Jesus' parable is simple: What you think is a weed might actually be a good plant. What you thought was a good plant might have actually been a weed. (Matthew 13:24-30)

Weeding out your vegetable garden may be a necessary part of your summer chores. But when it comes to people, distinguishing weeds from wheat is risky, even dangerous, a slippery slope.

Few of us know the whole story of another person's life. Most of us judge by appearances. We may judge others as being hypocrites when we ourselves are the bigger ones.

So instead of spending too much time judging who is good or bad, who is a "weed" and who isn't, Jesus would invite us to focus on the "garden" of our own souls.

Are we really “rooted” in the things that Christ stands for? Do our actions reveal whether we are wheat or weeds by the way we live. And, during these extraordinary times, what kind of seeds are we planting for the future? Because at some point this very unsettled season of history will pass. What will be the fruit of what we planted? If we don’t ask, be assured, our children will one day ask: What did you plant for us?

So, let the Master of the Harvest take care of weeds. There’s plenty of good work to do right now.

Fr. Steven Labaire