

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A

Wisdom 12:13,16-19
Ps 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16
Romans 8:26-27
Matthew 13:24-43

The Patience of God

James D. McBurney, O.S.A.

A reality of human relationships is that we have expectations of one another. Parents have expectations of their children, husbands have expectations of their wives and wives have expectations of their husbands. Teachers have expectations of their students. Employers have expectations of employees. Those of us called to religious life have expectations of our shared common life. The list goes on and on. It is good to have expectations of one another. However, tensions in relationships often develop when expectations are not met. When expectations are not met, we can rather easily form judgments about others.

How often in the course of a week (or, for that matter, in the course of a day) do we form judgments about things people say and do? I dare say it is probably more times than most of us are willing to admit. Our readings today say something to us about God and how God judges us and calls us to look upon each other: with great patience.

The author of the Book of Wisdom gives praise to God for the “clemency and lenience” with which God looks upon us. Our God is a just and saving God; patient and slow to anger. Does not our awareness of this fill us with hope? And should we not be further consoled by Paul’s words in the second reading, which tell us “the Spirit helps us in our weakness”?

The parable of the weeds and wheat in today’s Gospel also makes a statement about the patience and goodness of God. Discovering soon after planting good seed that weeds had been sown among the wheat, the slaves suggest to their master that the weeds be uprooted. But the master tells them to let the weeds and wheat grow together until harvest, at which time the weeds and the wheat will be separated. In essence, this parable is St. Matthew’s way of instructing the early Church about what to do when a community of believers realizes that it is comprised of members that are both strong and weak, good and bad. The parable is a reminder that as individuals and as a church we are a “mixed bag.” Our God invites us all to grow together until the harvest at the end of time, when God will sort the “weeds from the wheat.”

A final thought: To the extent that we are more patient with ourselves, we will be more patient with others. In the celebration of today’s Eucharist, may our hearts be opened to recognize the generosity and patience of our God. Having been nourished by God’s Word and the Bread of Life, may we, in turn, strive always to be patient with one another.