

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, July 19, 2026
16th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle A

The year was 1770, and in a small Italian church... Two altar boys, Annibale Della Genga and Francesco Castiglioni, were arguing over something inside the sacristy. Their quibble escalated into a shouting match. Alarmed parishioners turned their heads to the back of the Church to see the commotion, and that is when it happened: Castiglioni cracked Della Genga over the head with his candlestick.

Blood dripped from Della Genga's injury, and both boys began shoving each other. Shocked parishioners screamed, "Throw them out! Throw them out!" So, the embarrassed priest grabbed the boys, led them to the door, and tossed them out of the church.

Now fast-forward several decades to 1825... Half a million-people gathered in Rome for the Great Jubilee celebration. In front of thousands of pilgrims, Cardinal Della Genga made his way to the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica. It was fifty-five years after the candlestick incident. Cardinal Della Genga who had become Pope Leo XII neared the door. Turning to the Cardinal beside him – Cardinal Castiglioni, the Pope said "Let me have the hammer." With a sly grin, Castiglioni replied, "Just like I gave you the candlestick?"

Amazingly, four years later Castiglioni succeeded his friend and became Pope, taking the name Pius VIII. Now if you told any of those pew sitters back in

1770 that they had two future-Popes in the back of their church, they would have laughed you out of the building: “Those two boys? The ones shoving and whacking each other with candlesticks”?

Today’s gospel passage gives us the good news: that God can change even ‘weeds’ to ‘wheat.’ Today’s first reading from the Book of Wisdom teaches, “Though you are master of might, you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us.” Often, we are tempted to want it to be otherwise. We want God to judge and punish swiftly, surgically and severely. God, however, chooses patience and leniency – the way of mercy and compassion.

The message is clear: Judgment is not ours to pass! Judgment should be passed only at the end of a person’s life by God, not in the middle of it by a human person like him or her. The portrayal of God in the parable as a Sower who allows the weeds to grow with the wheat does not speak of God’s inability to uproot evil from the world. Rather, it only emphasizes God’s wisdom and patience that human mind cannot comprehend. It reveals God as the Lord who believes and hopes in the goodness of a person and patiently waits for that person to reform or change for the better.

We are not a Church of the perfect. A Church restricted to saints might be a nice Church but it would not be Christ’s Church.

As one writer puts it, “The Church is not only a gallery for the display of saints.” “It is also a school for the transformation of sinners.” I also like what

Charles Morrison said, “The Christian Church is a society of sinners.” “It is the only society in the world in which membership is based on the single qualification: that the candidate be unworthy of membership.”

It takes a godlike heart to accept the reality and coexistence of wheat and weeds in the world and in the Church. A godlike heart is a patient heart, a loving heart. It is the fatherly love of God that makes him hope that a sinner would turn out to be a saint after all. It is his love that hopes even for the hopeless person.

As Christians, we are called to share in this same spirit of God –patient, forbearing and, most of all, loving. We are called to act with kindness to our fellow human beings. We have to show our faith in God who alone knows the human heart. Let us end with a prayer:

Lord God, help us to realize
that the Church, Your family,
is not a showcase for saints
but a shelter for sinners.

Prevent us from passing judgment on anyone,
Help us take to heart Jesus’ words when he says:
“Stop judging and you will not be judged.
Stop condemning and you will not be condemned.
Forgive and you will be forgiven.” Amen.