

July 19, 2026—16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The James Webb telescope is the largest space telescope in orbit. It was launched by Nasa on December 25, 2021. I saw a YouTube video that reported scientists were astounded by the size of the universe revealed by this telescope; it was far bigger than they thought. I had to roll my eyes because they were surprised that anything could be that immense! **“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”**, Genesis tells us. God is an infinite Being, we are finite beings. God can create something that is far bigger and more wonderful than anything we can fit into our limited understanding. In the last century there were three major scientific discoveries that point to the existence of an almighty Creator. One of them was the expanding universe. If the universe is expanding, that means you can trace it backwards in time to the moment when there was nothing, which means there was a Creator. People of faith are not surprised about the unlimited creative power of Almighty God, but it is awesome!

One thing we can marvel at is revealed in the First Reading from the Book of Wisdom. The author points out that God **“has the care of all”**; **“But though You are the master of might, You judge with clemency, and with much leniency You govern us.”** God, the Almighty, has the care of an immense universe, but as small as you are in comparison to the universe, God cares for you as an individual. I love this quote from Pope Benedict XVI: We are **“not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.”** God is always the just and merciful Father. The Responsorial Psalm summarized it simply: **“Lord, You are good and forgiving”**.

This is the second of three Sundays that we read from chapter 13 of St. Matthew’s Gospel. In this chapter, Jesus changed His method of teaching. He speaks to them in the form of parables; there are 8 in this chapter. The parables of Jesus are usually short metaphors, using things from nature or ordinary life to teach us a spiritual truth.

The disciples of Jesus are open to His teaching and will be able to understand their meaning, even though He sometimes gives them extra help, like the explanation that we just read. On the other hand, the Pharisees and scribes will not be able to understand their meaning because they have closed their hearts to Him. The parables often use contrasting images to express this division between the two groups, such as wheat and weeds sown in the field.

To this day the parables give us rich insight into Jesus's teaching when we meditate upon them. When He speaks about the Kingdom of God, He is teaching about the Church which He is establishing.

The parable of the wheat and weeds tell us about the owner of the field who sows the crop of wheat and his servants soon see that there are also many weeds growing up amid the wheat. The farmer realizes that this was not an accident, but that an enemy sowed the weeds to destroy his crop. As Jesus later explained, He is the one who sows the good seed while the devil sows the weeds in His Church.

We often get discouraged when we see the infidelity of our fellow Catholics and especially of the clergy. Rightly so! Some will say that they don't want to be a Catholic because they witness Catholics who do not live what they profess. They don't want to be in a church of hypocrites! Well, come join us hypocrites because we do not claim to be without sin. We are all sinners in need of conversion and reform. That should not keep someone from being a Catholic.

I know that it is discouraging when we hear of priests and bishops who do scandalous things. If we study Church history, there are clearly some popes who were far from the conduct that their office demanded. Even so, none of them taught a heresy; the Church of Christ, the kingdom of God stands firm in the true faith! At the particular judgment, at the end of each life, Jesus will judge us perfectly and justly and mercifully. At the end of time in the general judgment, He will publicly manifest the separation of the wheat from the weeds.

The Church started out very small with the 12 apostles and those who were listening to Jesus as He went from town to town. It was like a mustard seed which is a very small seed. The kind of mustard seed that Jesus was referring to was just a speck; it was not nearly as big as the mustard seed that we use to make the condiment. Despite its size, that mustard seed would grow into a large bush. Jesus is telling us about the future growth of the Church which would spread throughout the world.

The third parable is about the woman who mixes the yeast with the wheat flour to make bread. It is the yeast that causes the wheat to rise and become a loaf of bread. Likewise, we must remember that we have an important role in spreading our Catholic faith to others. We are to be like leaven in the world and bring our faith to others. It is not just the work of missionaries in foreign lands, but also of each of us in our own part of the world. God is counting on us!