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**SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A
19th July, 2020**

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Today's gospel reading consists of three parables of the kingdom, and an interpretation of the first (v.24-30). The second parable (v.31-32) is curiously connected to two visions in Ezekiel and to Nebuchadnezzar's second dream in the book of Daniel, revealed in the references to birds that nest or dwell in the tree's branches (Ezek 17:23; 31:6; Dan 4:12). In Ezekiel 17 it is not the vigorous vine planted by the king of Babylon that survives, but the little shoot that God plucked from a tree and planted in Israel; it grows into a great tree, and is a home for the birds. Conversely, the great tree in Ezekiel 31 is Egypt, which, proud of its own grandeur, was brought down. Daniel's great tree is Nebuchadnezzar, who prides in his own greatness and is brought down, but repenting at the end he is restored to the throne as a humble king. By contrast, the gospel's humble mustard performs as the tree: the kingdom of heaven is not like the great kingdoms of earth, but is like the humble life of common people. The third parable (v.33) is the simplest: leaven works unseen—who knows how?—but certainly changing the dough and consequent bread from within. So too the kingdom of heaven works certainly but subtly, changing society from within.

Back in the first parable (v.24-30), unique to Matthew, there is a more complicated image. Related to last week's parable of the sower, its interpretation likewise originated in the early Church. Mark's version is like that of the yeast, but Matthew's has the added element of dandelion. It broaches the problem of evil: Why does God permit evil in the world? A simplistic approach presumes that what we find offensive should not exist, so God is not all-powerful or surely he would root evil out, or God is not good or surely he would not inflict pain. Thus concluding that there is no God is, in a perverse sense, to claim oneself to be an impotent god, for lurking at its depth is the thought, "If I were God, the world would be better". Almost in response to this, the first reading (Wis 12:13, 16-19) opens: "There is no god, other than you, who cares for everything". It develops the idea of how God's power reveals itself in leniency—a contrast to the ways of the world; for what earthly ruler is lenient to opposition? All over the world, in every age, rulers and governments declare opponents to be enemies to be repressed or uprooted, so in totalitarian regimes we have imprisonment, and executions, and invasions, while in others we find leaders and presidents encouraging mob harassment of the declared foe. This exercise of power is based in weakness, for these rulers have a real fear of being overthrown. God cannot be overthrown, and so is lenient; God seeks reform, and does not destroy for the sake of the good that is also present. So too in the parable: the servants are troubled by the dandelion, but the owner chooses not to damage the innocent wheat by uprooting the weed. Perhaps examination of the dandelion may challenge our simple classification of things as evil. Dandelion is a nuisance only when it grows with our wheat. The ryegrasses to which it belongs provide some of the most valuable pastures in the world. We name as weeds those plants that upset our plans, but this does not mean they are not valuable to others. Are we the only creatures who matter? And do we always know when the things we like rely on things we despise? Such is the wonder of the world—that all things move in balance, if we but had the wisdom to see as God sees, who alone knows good and evil, and who alone can judge justly.

By Rev Dr Barry Craig - Liturgia



"Time is greater than space," proposes Pope Francis. "It helps us patiently to endure difficult and adverse situations, or inevitable changes in our plans. It invites us to accept the tension between fullness and limitation, and to give a priority to time."



Worldwide Marriage Encounter COVID-SAFE live-out weekend – relationship enrichment for married couples on **24-25 October 2020** at Hendra (Brisbane inner suburb) – going home on the Saturday evening. **For bookings/details contact:** Maria and David Murphy, ph (07) 3342 1456, dandmmurphy@optusnet.com.au Information website: www.wvme.org.au
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Scripture Readings

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YR A

A reading from the 1st book of the Kings 3:5,7-12.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans 8:28-30.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 13:44-52.

Please remember in your prayers the following people:

Brian Carmichael, Scott Hines, Barry Guest, Rolf Germain, Pita Nepeta, Norma Quinn, Marcus Neudecker, Neola Corby, Anne Feeney, Christina Peters, Samantha Pride, Terry Segrave, Rita Miles, Steven Williams, Rohan Somasekaran, Thomas Bird, Bradley Wright, Greg Olsson-Lalor, Nina & Raymond Dove, Tia Huff, Helen Chicken, Dorothy Davidson, John Engwicht, Vera Versace, Michelle Woodworth, Abbie Wellspring, Lloyd Mason, Sharon McCourt, Gina Morieni, Paige Hoffman, Nicole Blackburn, Amanda Moyle, Tim McNickle, Kyle Huff, Nathalie Bernon, Ghishiane Smidt, Patrick Bosworth and Cath Campbell.

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