

There's a movie in town this week only called *Thérèse*. It's the story of a woman from the late 19th century, Thérèse Martin of Lisieux, France. She joined a Carmelite convent, contracted tuberculosis, wrote an autobiography, and died at a young age. Shortly afterwards she was canonized; we know her as St. Therese ~~the~~ the Little Flower. I found the movie quite good--it's objective about the life of this young woman. It's so objective that some I'm sure will be inspired by her religious discipline, others will be shocked at the rigors of convent life. Therese lived in a cloister, slept in the cold, and ate very little. Some will walk away from the film saying, "If that's what it takes to be holy, I'll never make it."

Let's ask the question, "Is that what it takes to be holy?" and answer it with today's parable of the weeds and the wheat. You know the situation: A farmer sowed good seeds in the field, expecting good crops to come up. But while the farmer slept, an enemy came and sowed ~~wheat~~ <sup>weeds</sup> in the field. Time goes by and the farmer and the servants discover both plants growing, so the servants ask, "What do we do now?"

Many parents have expressed this situation with regard to their children: They did their best to sow good seeds in the soil that is their offspring, only to wake up some morning and find an enemy has sown weeds. Or we see this inside of ourselves: We try to live a good life but it's like there's some awful power at work inside us whose origin we don't know and that we can't completely control. Sometimes we spot weeds in other people and they completely blind us from seeing their wheat. A person looks funny, or talks funny, or doesn't mow the lawn or something and we treat them like they are completely unworthy of human contact.

We like to have things neat, pure. We want the best product, the best care. Weeds are undesirable.

When the servants in the parable ask the farmer, "What do you want us to do? Do you want us to go pull up the weeds?" you would think any self-respecting farmer would jump at the chance to have the evil undone. But this one says "No, don't pull up the weeds, the evil will only worsen. Let the weeds and the wheat grow together, we'll straighten it out at harvest."

St. Therese is an extreme example of someone who kept weeds out of her life, but not all of us are able to do that. The temptation is to think, "If my children would only quit this bad habit they would be perfect." Or, "Since I have failed in my life, I am unworthy." Or, "I wouldn't mind associating with those people if only they changed a few things." The temptation is to think "God loves only what is perfect, so I will love only what is perfect." Jesus says no, he says no. Let the weeds and the wheat grow together.

He doesn't say weeds are good; far from it, the weeds ~~are~~ <sup>will be purged</sup> ~~going to get what's coming to them~~ at harvesttime, but in the meanwhile, they're part of life and they're acceptable. God loves us with our weeds. God is patient with us until the harvest. You can be holy and imperfect at the same time. Love yourself, love your neighbor with the weeds; be patient until the harvest.