



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©
* Knights of Malta *

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Chancellor's Update

An Enemy Hath Done This

Can we possibly see family members, relatives, acquaintances and even ourselves in this parable? *The Kingdom of heaven is likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and over sowed cockle among the wheat and went his way.* (Matt. XII 24-30)

Augustine, as above, XII: When the servants of God learn that the devil has contrived this fraud, that he might cloak his errors by this Name (of Christ) since he knew he could himself do nothing against the authority of so great a name, they may feel the impulse to remove such men from human affairs, if the opportunity presents itself; but whether they should do so let them take counsel of the divine justice, as to whether He commands this, or permits it, or if it be the duty of men? Hence the servants say: *Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?*

29. *And he said: No, lest perhaps gathering up the cockle . . .*

Chrysostom: Here we must note the zeal and affection of the servants, for they are eager to root out the tares, showing their anxiety for the good seed. They are concerned only with this, not that someone be punished, but that the seed which was sown may not perish. Then follows the answer of the Lord: *and He said: No.* **Jerome**: For time is allowed for repentance; and here we are warned lest, before due time, we cut off a brother. For it may happen that he who today is infected by some poisonous teaching, may tomorrow come to his right mind, and begin to defend the truth. Hence is added: *lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it.*

Augustine: as above, XII: In this way he restored them to complete tranquility and patience. For here it is made clear that even the good, since they too are still weak, have need in some things of mixing with sinners, either that through them they may be tested, or that by the contrast of their own way of life they may be a help to them, and attract them to the better things. Or lest perhaps the wheat be uprooted, while they try to remove the tares. Because many in the beginning are tares, and afterwards they become wheat, who, unless patiently endured while they are sinners, do not arrive at this meritorious transformation. And so, if they had been uprooted, then at the same time the wheat would have been uprooted which they would have become had they been spared.

30. *Suffer both to grow until the harvest, etc.*

Accordingly, He says that such are not to be removed from this life, lest in attempting to destroy those who are wicked, the good they might have become are also killed; or lest the good suffer loss, to whom the others, though unwillingly, are profitable. This will be done in due time, when, at the end, there is left neither time to change their manner of life, nor time to learn the truth, either by some favorable opportunity, or by comparing it with false teaching. And so, He said: *suffer both to grow until the harvest*, that is, until the time of judgement.

Jerome: But this seems to be contrary to the precept: *Put away the evil one from among yourselves* (1 Cor. v. 13). For if we are forbidden to uproot, and if we are to wait in patience until the harvest time, how then are we to cast out certain persons from amongst us? But, between the true wheat and the tares (which we call *lolium*), while the latter is still green, and the stalk not yet come into ear, there is a great similarity, and little or no difference between them so as to tell one from the other. The Lord therefore warns us that in the beginning we are not to be too ready to deliver judgement, where anything is uncertain; but that we leave judgement to God, so that when the day of the Judge shall come, He shall exclude the wicked from the company of the blessed, not on the mere suspicion of having committed an offence, but because of manifest guilt.

Augustine, *Contra Ep. Parmen*, 3, 2; pars. 13-16: In this I state something that is neither new or singular, but which the sound sense of the Church observes, namely: that when one of the Christians in full standing in the Church is taken in a fault of such a kind that he is deemed worthy of anathema, let this be done, providing there is no danger of schism, with love, so as not to uproot but to correct. But should he not come to acknowledge his fault, or amend it by repentance, then let him go forth, and let him, of his own will, be cut off from the communion of the Church. Hence was it the Lord said: *suffer both to grow until the harvest*, he added the reason of this: *lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it*, wherein He makes it sufficiently plain that, where this fear is absent, and where there is no anxiety as to the safety of the wheat, that is, when the crime of someone is so well known, and appears to everyone so execrable that he is entirely without defenders, or at least without such defenders as might cause a schism, then let the severity of the discipline not sleep; in which the more charity is observed the more efficacious will be the correction of error.

When however, the same disease has attacked very many, then nothing of good remains, only grief and pain. So therefore, let man correct as mercifully as he can. What he may not correct, let him endure with patience, and in Christian love let him grieve and deplore, until He on high emends and corrects; and let him leave until the harvest time the uprooting of the tares, and the sifting of the chaff. Who ponders these things will not, in preserving unity, neglect the strictness of discipline; nor sever the bond of union, by excess of coercion.

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