

*This is the text of Father Fraser's homily on the  
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, 17 July 2011.*

## Wheat and Tares

I, of course, cannot speak for you and your personal development, but I cannot claim credit for my own basic core values, the things that essentially make me what I am. They are a product of the family into which I was born and in which I grew up.

Because Anglicanism was such an overwhelmingly large part of my family's identity and day-by-day life, my values and perspectives are Anglican to the core. This, of course, means - although the term wasn't used when I was growing up - that they are Benedictine to the core. They are just who I am.

Among those Anglican, and thus Benedictine, values that were taught in my family were balance in all of life and the importance of the search after Truth (that is, with a capital *T*, God being the Ultimate Truth as well as the source of all other manifestations of truth). Because the narrow, and often blind and belligerent, defensiveness of partisan positions is not compatible with the search after Truth, it is a part of the lifestyle of both the ideological Left and the Religious Right (both Catholic and Protestant equally) that has always made me feel very uncomfortable and out of place. Also, it is what is so tragic about today's world-wide culture wars.

Another element of this partisan lifestyle is - as the Protestant fundamentalists put it - the refusal to "fellowship with the ungodly." An extreme example is the German Pietist Amish who "shun" - that is, cut themselves off completely from - those who have become what they believe is "worldly."

This is what Jesus is talking about in today's Gospel Reading, St Matthew's account of the Parable of the Tares. Jesus is teaching in no uncertain terms that His disciples are not authorized or empowered to separate the tares from the wheat. Only God is to do that, and He will do it at the end.

There are several important theological points here:

- One is that the Christian life is a life-long journey or a pilgrimage; becoming a "saved" Christian is not a transaction or an event or something to which we are predestined. All persons are called to this journey, and it is only God who can see who in the end are going to be wheat and who in the end are going to be tares.
- A second is that the Catholic - and hence the Anglican - Doctrine of Man teaches that all persons were created good by God but all are in a fallen state. That means that those who may appear to be tares now in fact have good to contribute. On the other hand, all those who may appear to be wheat now also have a dark side.

One contemporary theologian, writing about the experiential dimension of this parable has pointed out:

- First, if we attempt to separate ourselves (and others we consider to be wheat) from those we consider to be tares, we separate ourselves from the fullness of God's creation; and we get a very distorted view and understanding of God's world to which we have been explicitly commanded to minister by Jesus Christ Himself.
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- Second, each of us individually has both wheat and tares in his/her own life. As Jesus said, if someone else attempts to pull out our tares, wheat will be pulled up also.
  - We will be afraid to make mistakes and thus we will never take risks and grow into the fullness of what God created us to be.
  - We will be afraid our questions may seem foolish; and thus afraid to ask, we will never learn.

It is, needless to say, much more comfortable to be with those whom we consider to be wheat without the presence of those we consider tares. And to be sure, Our Lord Jesus Christ has commissioned us to teach all persons everywhere all that He has commanded us. It is not acceptable to be a co-dependent and enabler of ungodliness, either in our own lives or in the lives of others.

However, as Christians we are called and Baptised to be Catholic, not congregational. (And in the Catholic Church this is a fundamental theological matter.) While, quite appropriately, there are communities of those with specific commonalities within Catholicism, the Catholic Church itself is a world-wide family (those who are related by the birth of Baptism) made up of all the different sorts and conditions of human beings created by God (which is quite a different thing from a community).

We are called, not to separate the wheat from the tares, but to be the sacramental Body of Christ in this world until the end of time. And God Himself will take care of all the rest.