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-- A little over a week ago, Fr. Ritter, our diocesan administrator, celebrated the funeral for Fr. Gerry Robinson. As many of you remember, Fr. Robinson was convicted in 2006 of the 1980 murder of Sr. Margaret Ann Pahl. This was only the second time in the history of our country that a priest had been convicted of murder. He died in prison.

-- Fr. Ritter had released a statement after his death announcing that he would be buried as a priest, as his case was still on appeal. He said he did not know whether Fr. Robinson was guilty (who'd continued to maintain his innocence), that he like all of us was a sinner in need of God's mercy.

-- God has made the ultimate judgment of Fr. Robinson. God will do the same for each of us when we die. The murder of Sr. Margaret was gruesome, and the power of evil was clearly evident in that act. A jury was charged to do its best to make a judgment of guilt. But God is the true and final judge of us all.

-- The parable of the wheat and the weeds reminds us that all of this will be sorted out at the end of time. It also cautions us about the temptation to take to ourselves the authority to root out evil too quickly.

-- At their early stages, the wheat and the weeds are often hard to distinguish. The parable of the mustard seed also tells us that initial appearances can be deceiving.

-- In addition, the roots of the wheat and weeds can easily get entangled. Pulling up weeds can result in pulling up wheat—that's not acceptable "collateral damage."

-- This is an analogy to our own lives. All of us have a mixture of wheat and weeds in us. Virtue and evil do battle within us, and it often takes time and much discernment for us to sort out one from the other.

- Yet it's all too easy to believe that we are the wheat, the righteous ones. Sure, we are sinners (though "minor" ones), but those "other people" are truly evil. We make neat divisions—too neat, in fact.
- It doesn't take much to go from there to reserving to ourselves the right to judge others. I believe that may be behind at least some of the calls to deny communion to certain public figures because of their questionable views.
- We can fall to that temptation when we are too quick to judge others, when we do not allow time for someone's fruits to become evident.
- Yogi Berra, the NY catcher known for his pithy statements, once said *it ain't over till it's over*. That's true in baseball, when many a fan has left the ballpark in the 7th inning only to miss the walk off homer in the bottom of the 9th that changed the outcome of the game.
- It's true in our personal lives and the lives of others around us as well. The wheat and the weeds teach us that.
- Meanwhile, we ought to be more concerned about the weeds that are cropping up within us than we are with judging and uprooting what seem to be the weeds in others.
- For, when all is said and done, we have more power (with God's help, of course) to change ourselves than we do to purify other people's lives.
- And, in the end, we will all have to stand before the ultimate judge of our lives. Our God is forbearing and merciful. But he will evaluate the wheat and weeds in our lives.
- There is no appeal from God's judgment.