

Those of you who have a garden will know it's so much easier to grow weeds than any other plant; in fact, you just have to turn around for a second and a weed pops up!

Praying, too, is like that: like the man in the Gospel who sows good seed, but weeds shoot up, and try to choke and kill the good wheat he's hoped to harvest.

But those weeds don't appear randomly; his enemy has planted them in the hope that he'll pull them up and, with them, the good seed he's planted.

Then, he'll be left with nothing: just an empty, arid field which, won't produce anything that will last.

The enemy in today's Parable isn't just something Jesus digs up from His imagination to illustrate His point.

No, the enemy is not a figment of the imagination, he's real; the enemy is the Devil.

Yes, I know in this so-called enlightened age, people – and lots of Christian people – have difficulty in believing in the existence of the Devil.

But I'm with Pope Francis in taking the reality of the Evil One seriously: "The presence of the devil [Francis says] is on the first page of the Bible, and the Bible ends as well with the presence of the devil, [but] with the victory of God over the devil. We should not be naïve [he concludes, about the reality of the devil]." [Pope Francis: Vatican Radio October 11 2013](#)

It is he who sows the weeds of distraction in our hearts when we try to pray to the Lord but, you know, we must never forget these words of Paul we've just heard: "The Spirit comes to help us in our weakness." [Rm. 8: 26](#)

Then we have the victory over Satan and all his works, and all his empty promises,

He can't make us think that Jesus will condemn us for not being perfect, because: "There is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death." [Rm. 8: 1 – 2](#)

When you and I were Confirmed, the Bishop anointed us with Chrism, and said: "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."

By that anointing, and those words, the Spirit of the Lord indwells us.

Satan can't break that seal: Jesus has sealed us so that we can walk in safety through the valley of the shadow of death to dwell eternally in the Father's House.

Now, we need the Spirit: "To help us in our weakness. For we cannot choose words in order to pray properly." [Rm. 8: 26](#)

Then, we won't need human words for we'll be able to communicate with the Lord face to face: "With sighs too deep for words." [Rm. 8: 26](#)

That short extract we heard in the second reading from Romans is a small part of Chapter 8 of Paul's Letter: it's a chapter that's worth reading in its entirety, and reflecting on its implications for our life as a follower of Jesus.

Paul looks the world in the eye, just as it is; and, despite all the weeds of evil and suffering he sees around him, he says this at the end of that chapter: "Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love – not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love." [Rm. 8: 37 – 38](#)

Now, looking round our world, it might appear that the 'powers of hell' are indeed winning; that the weeds of evil are choking to death the minute mustard seed of goodness we try to plant as we do our best to be sowers of the seed of faith in the Lord Jesus.

Well, we will be choked if we allow our hearts to be hardened; for if your heart is hardened, you can't love.

You can love in a 'Rom-com' – romantic comedy movie – sort of way, but it's not the same as Christian love.

Christian love is concrete; it's not frothy; it's realistic love; it sees the world with absolute clarity, and wants to redeem it for Jesus.

So, for us to love in that way, the only way to do so is to abide in the Lord, and the Lord in us – to be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit in this life.

The same Spirit who overshadowed Mary, and brought Jesus to life in her, is the self-same Spirit who dwells within us, and brings Jesus to birth in us.

And it has to be so, for Christianity is concrete and fleshly: the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.

God, who is Spirit and Truth, became enfleshed in Jesus of Nazareth – God made Man, and Christianity without this foundation isn't true Christianity.

The key to Christian life, to living in the assurance that: "Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us." [Rm. 8: 37](#) is faith in Jesus Christ, the Word of God made Man, and in Him alone.

When you feel the weeds of the world are choking the desire in you to pray to the Lord; when you feel the Devil is trying to kill your mustard seed of faith, ask the Spirit to help you in your weakness.

Turn to Jesus, knowing that overwhelming victory is yours in Him.

So don't abide in the spirit of the world; don't abide in superficiality; don't abide in vanity; don't abide in despair.

No! Abide in the Lord.

That mutual, intimate indwelling; we in Jesus, and Jesus in us.