Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



A planted vegetable field with mulch film (Wikimedia Commons/Florian Gerlach [Nawaro], CC BY-SA 3.0 deed)



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Editor's note: *Welcome to Theologians' Corner, where each week a different woman theologian from around the world offers a fresh reflection on the Sunday readings.*



16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 19, 2026

Recently I have been developing a growing interest in smart agriculture, not simply as a hobby, but as a way of learning in order to better support others, especially those with limited resources, to improve their livelihoods. One discovery that has particularly inspired me is the use of mulch film. It helps conserve water and nutrients. More importantly, it acts as a protective shield against weeds and pests.

This lived experience connects strongly with this Sunday's Gospel reading from Matthew (13:24-43). Imagine a maize farm overrun by aggressive weeds like spear grass. The weeds grow faster and stronger than the crops. Their roots become

intertwined with the maize, suffocating it, competing for nutrients, and overshadowing the farmer's original intention. In such a situation, a pressing question arises: What does the farmer do?

This is the very tension at the heart of Jesus' parable of the weeds among the wheat. A farmer sows good seed, but an enemy secretly sows weeds among it. When both begin to grow, the slaves notice and eagerly want to act: "Do you want us to go and pull them up?" The farm owner, however, refuses. She tells them to let both grow together until the harvest.

At first, this seems like poor judgment. Why allow weeds to remain? Why risk the entire farm project?

The first reading from the Book of Wisdom gives us the key: God's power is shown not in haste, but in mercy. "You judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us." God is just. However, God's justice is patient. God does not rush to uproot, because She sees what we do not. Just as the roots of weeds and wheat can be deeply intertwined, so too the good and the broken in human lives are often inseparable at first glance. To act too quickly may destroy what is still growing. God's patience, therefore, is not indifference to evil. It is a deliberate space to allow for human repentance, growth and transformation.

Jesus explains that the field is the world. However, it is also our own hearts. Within each of us, there is both wheat and weeds; grace and weakness, generosity and selfishness, faith and doubt. We may be tempted to judge quickly: others, the world, even ourselves. Yet God invites us to a different approach; one of humility and trust. Psalm 86 reminds us: "You, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in kindness to all who call upon you." Thus God does not give up on the field but continues to work patiently within it.

In the second reading, from the Letter to the Romans (8:26-27), we hear Paul reminding us that even when we do not know how to pray, the Spirit intercedes for us. This is a deeply consoling truth. Beneath the visible struggles of our lives, something hidden is happening; like roots growing beneath the soil. The Holy Spirit is quietly at work, sustaining us, guiding us, and drawing good even out of our weakness. God is not absent in the messiness of life, but is present within it.

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Still in the Gospel we hear two more short parables: that of the mustard seed and that of the yeast. Both point to the same truth; that the reign of God often begins in small, hidden ways. The mustard seed, though tiny, becomes a great shrub. The yeast, though unseen, transforms the entire dough. In a world where weeds seem to grow quickly; where injustice, hardship and discouragement can feel overwhelming, these images remind us not to lose hope. God's work may be quiet and hidden, but it is real, and it is powerful.

This Gospel is not calling us to passivity. The farmer does not ignore the field but cares for it wisely. So what does this mean for us? First, we are called to patience; with others and with ourselves. Not every flaw must be immediately "fixed." Growth takes time. God is still at work in people we may be tempted to dismiss.

Second, we are called to humility in judgment. We do not always see clearly who is the "wheat" and who is the "weeds." God alone sees the full story. Third, and most importantly, we are called to actively cultivate good. This is where the image of the mulch film becomes meaningful again. Just as mulch films protects crops and limits the growth of harmful weeds, we too must create conditions in our lives where grace can flourish.

What might this look like?

- Making time for daily prayer, even when it feels dry;
- Choosing kindness in situations where negativity spreads easily;
- Building communities that support growth rather than tear others down;
- Protecting our hearts from influences that choke what is good.

We may not be able to remove every "weed" immediately but we can strengthen the "wheat."

This story appears in the **Theologians' Corner** feature series. View the full series.