

September 30th: Memorial of Saint Jerome, Priest and Doctor of the Church

Gospel text (Mt 13:47-52): Jesus said to the disciples: “The Kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.” Do you understand all these things?” They answered, “Yes.” And he replied, “Then every scribe who has been instructed in the Kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old.”

“A net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind”

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Today, we read the parable of the net that caught all kinds of fish. St. Jerome, the man of ancient times who more and better studied the Bible, places this parable in parallel with that of the wheat and tares. In both parables the good and the bad coexist, without the limits separating one from the other being set up. In real life, those of us who claim to be "good" may not be as much as we think; nor should those we consider "bad" be taken as lost cases. A change is always possible, and we can expect it in ourselves and in others. Pope Francis says that "now is a time of hope, and hope, in principle, does not rule out anything or anyone".

Jesus' mention of the blazing furnace, the weeping and gnashing of teeth (cf. Mt 13:50) does not pretend to hurt or discourage us. On the contrary, what He wants is for us to keep our hopes alive, to be farsighted and to opt already now for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Only in the eschatological dimension will it be possible to discern who is definitely good and who is not. For the time being, he who is not good enough can always be changed. In the end it is possible that the one we considered worse than ourselves, be evaluated as good; and that those of us who thought to be so good, who knows whether our goodness will exceed the rigorous examination we will have to go through!

In any case, the parable makes it clear that in this life we are not one to do either discernment or selection. It is none of our business. We have to wait for the end of the world which is when the Master will make the final choice.

Toward the end, Jesus poses the question that every good teacher asks his students: " Do you understand all these things?" (Mt 13:51). We, His disciples, what shall we answer him?