

1. When a child is born, the only things that his or her parents know are the child's gender and who they resemble more. As their life unfolds the influences of those around him or her form them into the person they will become. This past year I met with each of the students that were confirmed and offered them a reminder of this. We learn a lot of our habits and form a lot of our ideas about the most important things of daily living such as: work ethic, respect for family and friends, how we view the value of human life, among many others. There is a scene from the movie 'Good Will Hunting' in which Robin Williams' character, a psychologist, converses with an old friend, who is an MIT professor in mathematics, about a young man that both of them are mentoring in their respective fields. They are at a bar eating lunch and the professor asks the bartender, Timmy, to help them settle a bet about whether or not the math professor had made a difference in his field. The professor asks about some important people in world history such as Jonas Salk, who cured polio. The next person is Albert Einstein who had many accomplishments. He then asked about himself: Gerald Lambeau and the bartender admits that he does not know who he is. Gerald's point was that unless we make our name known by what we do or what we stand for, we will not be remembered. These two men did remarkable things for good and to show that a person can have a negative effect Robin Williams' character proves this by tells his friend about a person who caused great harm to the public by saying: Hey, Gerry, In the 1960s there was a young man that graduated from the University of Michigan. Did some brilliant work in mathematics. Specifically bounded harmonic functions. Then he went on to Berkeley. He was assistant professor. Showed amazing potential. Then he moved to Montana, and blew the competition away.
2. Lambeau: Yeah, so who was he?
Sean: Ted Kaczynski.
Lambeau: Haven't heard of him.
Sean: [*yelling to the bartender*] Hey, Timmy!
Timmy: Yo.
Sean: Who's Ted Kaczynski?
Timmy: Unabomber.

3. The story of the mustard seed in today's gospel is a reminder of reality that one person can make a difference for good or for ill. When we match this with the parable of the weeds and the wheat we gain the understanding that something good and fruitful can come from something very unassuming. Think of a person such as Saint Teresa of Calcutta, lowly nun who received the invitation from Jesus to serve him in the poorest of the poor throughout the world. Think of a person like Saint Therese of Lisieux who spent her short life in the Carmelite order but shows us a way of holiness that is simple and accessible.
4. We must recall that each of these parables are about the kingdom of heaven and the saints that I have mentioned had to deal with the weeds that the evil one sows in our life. The weed that is referred to in this passage is a type that is very similar to wheat in its appearance. It is only until harvest time that the weed shows its true nature and the grain that comes from this weed is toxic. This added knowledge helps impress upon us the need to stay away from things that harm us physically but even more so things that threaten our spiritual life. The reality is that we live in what Pope Francis calls a throw away culture that lacks respect for the protection of life from conception until natural death, acknowledges the true nature of marriage, and desires to eliminate God from our culture.
5. As individuals there are things that we can do to help ourselves in this battles against the weeds that the evil desires to sow in our world. One way to express this is the term spiritual combat. Obviously we are far removed from Lent, but the three things that we are encourage to do during Lent are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Each of these are important in battling the weeds in our life because they practice self-denial. Other elements of our faith that are what we are doing right now: celebrating Mass and receiving Jesus in Holy Communion. In a particular way parents have the opportunity to help their children stay away from the weeds of our culture.
6. My prayer for each of you is that we use what God has given us to bear good fruit, sow the seed of God's word, and be leaven for others in bringing the Gospel to those in most need.