

### Judgment

As a missionary priest I have the opportunity to visit many Catholic schools across Australia. A real highlight for me is to be invited into a classroom to spend time with the teachers and students. It's a wonderful occasion to help them get to know Jesus more deeply and to share with them the richness of the Good News.

I always encourage the students to ask questions, because faith is not something static. Faith is alive and, through their questions, the students set out on an exciting and revealing journey of discovery in their relationship with God.

Questions are a great way of keeping me on my toes and you have to be prepared for anything! Some are easier to answer: "What footy team do you go for?" "Would Jesus have used tartare sauce when he ate fish?" "Will there be McDonald's in heaven?" "How much do you get paid?"

But there is also a deeper questioning: "What's your idea of God?" "Who made God?" "Why do bad things happen to people?" "What happens when we die?"

In one class there were questions about heaven and hell and who goes where. The students asked about Saddam Hussein and Adolf Hitler and what happens to them. Students do ask the deep questions.

Today's gospel parable about the wheat and the weeds gives some insight into how we might approach questions like this.

We live in a world that is very quick to classify people, and once they have been classified as evil, some might say that for them there is no hope, no second chance, no redemption. Yet, the parable warns us against making *final* judgments about who is good and who is evil.

Throughout our lives we make judgments, both about ourselves and about others. That's only natural. In many cases we have a need to judge and we have a right to do so.

But our judgments are not the *final* word. For the last word we look to God. We do so remembering God's mercy, justice and goodness. God will settle what the final boundaries are at the end of time. God will do so in ways known only to God.

God's love is never reactive. God's love is not a reward, a tick of approval given on account of our good behaviour. The weeds will grow, but God is patient and merciful.

The parable ultimately takes us back to the beginning of creation. God created the world out of love and saw that it was good, very good. When we look into the heart of the mystery of all that surrounds us, what we see is pure gift.

God looks at the whole of a person's life. That is why the final judgment can't come till the end and only God has the right and the full knowledge needed to make that judgment.