

God Judges With Patience and Compassion

Alois Terry Leiter. You've probably never heard of him. How about Al Leiter as he was commonly known? Still don't know who he is? Well, if you followed the fortunes of the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team in the early 1990's, you would know about Al Leiter.

Al was a pitcher who started his Major League career with the New York Yankees in the 1987 season but, in 1989, he was traded to the Blue Jays. Unfortunately, Al required a couple of surgeries on his throwing arm and, coupled with a pinched nerve, tendonitis, and a recurring series of blisters on the fingers of his throwing hand, he pitched very little for the Blue Jays from 1989 through 1992.

For those four seasons, Al spent almost all of his time rehabilitating and playing in the minor leagues. Whenever it seemed like he was ready to play in the Major Leagues, another blister would appear on one of his fingers so he couldn't hold the ball properly. Once again, he would be sent back to rehab. His blister problem was so acute that fans and baseball writers would sarcastically call him: Al 'the Blister' Leiter.

For four years, the Blue Jays management waited patiently for Al to recover in spite of calls from many people who wanted Al to be traded. In the end, their patience was rewarded. In 1993, Al Leiter pitched a full season and was instrumental in the Blue Jays winning their second World Series Championship. Al went on to have a distinguished career, pitching nineteen years in the Major Leagues including being selected as an All-Star twice, pitching a no-hitter, and winning another Championship.

While many people were quick to rate Al as a ballplayer with great promise who would never live up to that promise, the Blue Jays exercised great patience and did not rush to judgment.

In the Gospel for this Sunday (Matt. 13: 24-43), Jesus shows us, once again, that God's ways are not our ways. God is patient and kind. He does not judge hastily.

Jesus tells the parable of the sower who sowed good seed in the field but, while everyone was sleeping, an enemy sowed weed seeds in the field also. When the seeds sprouted, everyone could see that both wheat and weeds were growing. When the slaves asked if they should take out the weeds, the master told them to wait until harvest time because, if they took out the weeds early, they could damage the wheat.

Also, only at harvest time, can one see clearly which plants are the weeds and which are the wheat. If one acted too early, one might mistakenly take out some of the wheat.

Jesus explained that He was the sower, the good seed were the children of God, and the weeds were the children of the evil one. He noted that harvest time was the 'end of the age', the time of reckoning when the evildoers would be separated from the righteous and thrown into the fire.

Through the use of this parable, Jesus shows us that the roots of evil and good are intertwined. Pulling out evil too early can damage the good. Also, by waiting, it is possible for evil to be transformed into good and vice versa. Jesus tells us not to rush to judgment. God gives us plenty of chances.

The Book of Wisdom contains these lines that tell us how God judges:

*Although you are sovereign in strength,
you judge with mildness,
and with great forbearance you govern us; for you have power to act
whenever you choose.*

The Toronto Blue Jays management judged Al Leiter mildly and with forbearance and they, as well as all of baseball, were rewarded. Let us follow this example in our own lives and exercise patience, compassion and humility in judging others.