

## Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time B - Trusting in God's Time

June 13, 2021.

Summer is almost here with temperature in double digits as high as 30C. My wife is busy gardening: weeding, mowing, trimming, sowing. She nurtures and waters everyday, keeping her fingers crossed, praying and looking forward to a dandelion-free lawn, beautiful flowers and fresh homegrown veggies.

This Sunday's gospel says that ***The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how***". It brings to mind people with green thumbs, the person who seems to walk by, and plants just naturally perk up. The person whose yard is an explosion of colour; whose roses are perpetually in bloom; whose seeds always germinate and sprout as they should. The gospel reading (Mark 4:26-34) contains two parables about farmers. **The first is the parable of the seed.** The farmer plants the seed and goes about his routine day after day. Eventually the seed grows, not because the farmer does something special, but because nature took its course. By the way, to the ancients every grain of wheat, every flower, was a miracle of God's hand. **The second parable is that of the mustard seed** which seems insignificant, but with the growth that God gives, becomes a plant, probably 8 to 10 feet, large enough to shelter the birds of the sky. These two parables of the Kingdom of God tell us that we have to trust in God to give growth to the Kingdom. Furthermore, the growth He gives will be greater than we could ever imagine. **The kingdom that we trust God to give growth to could be the Kingdom of our church in the world, the Kingdom of our parish right here, or, particularly, the Kingdom of our home.**

For several centuries, society has favoured a relationship with reality based on action and control. When a problem arises, we immediately think we must act, plan and resolve it. Some even try to "fix problem" before it "actually arises". Yet, at one time or another, most of us experience failure despite a strong will to succeed. One wants to lose weight, yet by frustrating oneself through eating less, one gains weight. One wants to be perfect in work, but in never ceasing to think about it, one gets exhausted. Sometimes it is as if the more we do, the more ineffective we become. To make matters worse, we expect too much to happen too soon. Sometimes we get thoroughly disappointed in ourselves because we are not the perfect people we think we are. Sometimes we are impatient with how we or others are progressing in life. We may be upset with our home situations, our marriages, our families, our jobs. What we have to understand is that none of us are self-made. If we trust in God, He will give growth. This growth might be very subtle, nothing we can put our fingers on. But after a while it suddenly occurs to us: God has brought us a long way. If we trust in God the growth that He gives us will be more than we could imagine. We, like the farmers, have to be patient. We have to recognize that we really can't do things ourselves. We have to depend upon nature. We are all small seeds, but God can make of us big trees. **If we think that we can do everything ourselves, and if we don't trust in God, we won't get anywhere. None of us can make ourselves or others grow.**

Problems are normal in life. They keep coming back. The problem is maintained by the solutions attempted to solve it; this implies that in order for it to get better, it is necessary not to repeat the behaviours that were put in place to intentionally solve the problem. In short, it is by ceasing to do something to change that we change; by ceasing to fight against our problem that it is solved. This approach directly echoes the principle in Taoism, a Chinese philosophical tradition dating back to the fourth century BC. — becoming one with the rhythms of nature: ***Thus, the True Person acts without striving and teaches without words. Nourish them***

**without claiming authority, Benefit them without demanding gratitude, Do the work, then move on. And, the fruits of your labour will last forever.**" (Lao Tse' Tao-Teh-King. (老子道德經) Chapter 2). This does not mean "doing nothing", rather, it means acting in the natural order of things — to allow a higher order, life, nature or the cosmos to direct the action. It is a bit like the river that is flowing, the plant that is growing or the belly of a pregnant woman that is rounding. Far from encouraging passivity or fatalism, non-action puts us back into the natural movement of life. It is not inactivity, but activity other than that which is defined by action.

So we need to let go and let God. The seed of God's word was first planted in our hearts at baptism. In order for the kingdom of God to take root, we have to water and tenderly care for it so it can work powerfully within us. This seed has only one chance in life and we want to make sure, with God's help, that it is going to germinate where it has a chance to grow. This happens when we read scripture and pray. Our soil is made nutrient-dense when we rest it from constant planting. Our soil is turned and aerated when we pray and take time to dwell with God. Digging into the Word creates space in the soil, keeping it from compacting and preparing it to be good ground in which God's kingdom will take root. We water our small seedlings when we pray or meditate, when we take time to rest in God. This might look different for different people; for some, being with God is singing worship music, or sitting in silence or reading a book or going for a walk. Taking time to abide in God, the seeds we are caring for are scattered into good soil and nurtured as they grow. As Jeremiah puts it (17:7-8): **"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: It fears not the heat when it comes, its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit."** In nature, life comes and goes; we grow and flourish, then we wither and die. But not in super-nature, not when God's grace is the principle and source of our life. **Faithful followers of the Lord "shall bear fruit even in old age, always vigorous and sturdy."**

As we make our way into this new liturgical season of Ordinary Time after Pentecost, a season full of opportunities for spiritual and moral growth, let's keep these images in mind. They will help us navigate through the dangerous temptations of discouragement and frustration. The kingdom of God is like a seed – it is coded, already, with the plant it is going to grow into. But it still needs good soil to take root. It needs levels of nutrients and water and a clear patch of earth to call its own. While we don't have to do the work of creating the seed, we do have a responsibility to prepare the soil. The seed **The kingdom of God will surprise us with how and where and when it pops up. After all with His green thumbs, He does a pretty good job with beautiful flowers and yummy fresh veggies from just little seeds.**