

## **The Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time June 13, 2021**

Despite all the work that goes into it, (working the soil, planting, fertilizing, eliminating pests, etc.) in the end, farmers still have to trust that nature will take its course and allow the seeds to grow into mature crops. Besides watering and protecting the crops, there is nothing else they can do to make them grow. The plants have to do that on their own and all the farmer can do is wait and hope.

In today's gospel, Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God is like the situation of a farmer waiting for seed to grow. Like a seed, God's Kingdom grows slowly and silently. We might look out and see only dirt but, underneath the surface, God is active, making His Kingdom grow until, without notice, it finally appears and begins to give fruit.

We can apply Jesus' parable both to our own personal spiritual growth and our growth as a community of faith.

Just as there are many things that farmers need to do to prepare their land for a rich harvest, so there are many things we need to do to grow in our faith. We need to make time for prayer every day which is like clearing the land. We need to read the Bible which is like planting the seeds. We also need to receive the Sacraments frequently, especially by going to Mass and receiving the Eucharist. That is like watering and fertilizing the soil of our souls.

But, in the end, our spiritual growth is all God's work. Like farmers, we need to wait for the fruit to appear in expectant faith and hope. Bearing fruit in faith, hope, and love is a gift of God. These fruits do not appear overnight. Only with time do they take root in us, blossom, and flower. We cannot force ourselves to grow any more than farmers can force their crops to grow. We need to continue praying, reading the Bible, doing good works, and receiving the Sacraments, even when it seems that nothing is happening, with total trust that God is giving us growth.

The same is true for our growth as a parish and as a Church. We need to be serving the needy, praying together, educating the young, and offering the Sacraments. Even so, it is God who gives the growth. No matter how hard we work, none of us has the power to change hearts. Only God can do that. We might not see results as quickly as we would like. Still, we need to trust that God is in charge and that He is faithful. He wants to see our parish and Church grow even more than we do. But, much of that growth takes place beneath the surface in ways that only He knows and can see.

And just as there are seasons in nature, there are also seasons in our spiritual life both as individuals and as a believing community. There are times in our life which are like summer, when everything grows quickly, the days are always sunny, and life is

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good. But there are also times like autumn, when we sense a chill in the air, the growth stops, and everything turns brown. There are also times like the winter when the days are short and cold and everything seems dead. But then spring comes along to thaw our hearts and hope begins to take root in us again.

No matter what season we are in, no matter how much or how little growth we see in ourselves or in our Church, Jesus is calling us to trust that it is all God's work. There is only so much we can do and then we have to leave the rest up to God. After a long day of serving God's people, Pope Saint John XXIII would end his day saying, "I've done my best I could in your service this day, Oh Lord. I'm going to bed. It's your church. Take care of it!" We should have the same attitude of trust both in dealing with ourselves and with our Church.

The reason for our hope and trust is that God is faithful to His promises. Also, God is at work preparing something greater than we could ever hope for or imagine. Our wildest dreams for ourselves, for our Church, and for our world are only a dim shadow of what God actually has planned. It is simply beyond our intelligence and imagination to picture it.

Jesus speaks to this in today's second parable. When we look at a seed, we cannot understand all the potential that it has. How can such a large tree come from something as small as a mustard seed? Just so, could anyone two-thousand years ago imagine that Jesus and twelve apostles could establish a Church that would spread throughout the whole world and change the course of human history forever? Yet it happened because God gave it growth. And He is not through with us yet. He promises to do even greater things. We might not see it in our lifetime. We might not even recognize it as it's happening. But we know it will be great because our God is great.

In today's second reading, St Paul tells us to be courageous. We are on a journey to our heavenly home land. We do not see the destination yet but we continue to go forward walking by faith in God's promises. We do not see all the growth we would like to see in ourselves or in our Church, but we trust that God is at work. So, with trust, we continue to live and to work, even when we don't see many results, knowing that God is faithful to His promises and true to His word, and that we will one day reach a summer that will never end when we are finally at home with the Lord.