

11<sup>th</sup> Sunday  
6/13/2021

## IN THE ORDINARY

He spoke to them in parables about the Kingdom of God. Jesus doesn't give a definition, rather he shares images with the people. The Kingdom of God is a mystery and sometimes mysteries are better understood with images.

The first thing we learn is that the Kingdom of God is at work in the ordinary. Jesus doesn't speak about the parting of the Red Sea or of some tremendous miracle or even at this point of the Resurrection. Those are all certainly ways God is at work but God is also at work in the ordinary. God is at work slowly, quietly and yet effectively, like the seed that grows into a full grain. Like radioactive material, the Kingdom of God can be small but potent. That large bush started with a tiny seed.

We also learn that the Kingdom of God gives shelter. That tiny mustard seed grows to where the birds of the sky dwell in its shade. The Prophet Ezekiel describes something similar in the first reading. The Kingdom of God is to give shelter and comfort. The birds can be seen as the nations of the world. We could say the Kingdom of God is a place where people also encounter the shelter of God's grace and mercy. Pope Francis has spoken of parishes being islands of mercy in the midst of a sea of indifference. What a beautiful description for a parish, an island of mercy.

Every year on my patio in some large pots I plant some herbs. This year, burying the seeds led me to reflect on how planting is an expression of hope. You put seeds into the ground hoping and waiting for them to spring up. The Kingdom of God requires patience and hope. In some languages, the same word is used both for waiting and for hope. To hope is to wait for what has not yet come. It can emerge gradually, slowly and yet in a very real way.

This means we are called to be patient with God, trusting that his ways are not our ways and that he has his own timing for things. This means that we're to be patient with those around, building on the Our Father we could say, *Lord, be patient with us to the extent that we are patient with others.* That can be a scary prayer.

But this also means that we are to be patient with ourselves. This isn't to excuse ourselves but rather to realize that we're limited, finite creatures but that we're moving towards a goal that is unlimited and infinite.

Many years ago a different parish, there was a young girl who participated in the Knights of Columbus free throw basketball competition and she did very well at the local, state and even regional level. Someone asked her mother how she did so well and her mother said that she practiced a lot and that she didn't get upset when she missed but continued to concentrate. In other words, she was patient with herself while still holding herself to high expectations. It's the patience of persevering not only when it's convenient or when there's something exciting, but rather in the daily, and sometimes even boring routines of life, in every little way.

The Kingdom of God is a much studied expression but we can take it to mean God's Sovereignty, or God's way. Some would simply say that Jesus is the Kingdom of God. We could say that the Kingdom is the way God would have things be done or God's plan. The Kingdom of God is doing the will of God; with living the words we so often pray, *Thy will be done*.

The gospel reminds us that the Kingdom of God is potent and at work in the ordinary. The Kingdom of God gives shelter and the Kingdom of God requires patience, sometimes a lot of patience. It means that we live our lives with attention to God at work in the ordinary, as well as the extraordinary.

But the Kingdom of God also involves faith and St. Paul reminds us of this in the second reading. He says that we walk by faith and not by sight. If hope is waiting for what has not yet happened, faith is believing in and trusting in what we don't see. Faith and hope go together.

Planting seeds not only expresses hope; it also expresses faith. And when we bury our beloved dead, that can be seen as a type of planting. It too expresses faith and hope in the resurrection.

In the soil of our lives, perhaps that grain or mustard seed is already at work. God is at work in our lives. God has been at work in each of our lives this past week, although it may require prayer and reflection to realize that. We ask for wisdom to understand how God is at work and for courage to carry it out.

So too, God's healing can be at work, whether it's a terrible shock we face or learning news that is devastating. God's healing can be at work slowly, quietly but in a very real way.

St. Paul also speaks some important words, *We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ*. Our actions have consequences. We do well to remember that God takes our actions seriously and we're called to do the same. Psalm 111 says, *To fear the Lord is the first stage of wisdom*. While that may be the first stage, it isn't the last. Hopefully all this will lead us to ground ourselves more and more in love and less in fear. It further calls us to stay close to God's mercy, which is more powerful than our sins.

The Kingdom of God is a matter of faith, hope and charity. The Kingdom of God is at work in ordinary, gives shelter and requires patience. Strengthened by the Eucharist we now celebrate, may we live lives of intentional faith, living hope and active charity. Sheltered by God's grace and mercy, may we patiently see God at work in the ordinary events of our daily lives and strive to do what we are called to do in building up the Kingdom of God.