

Cycle B 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1 Ez 17:22-24

Thus says the Lord GOD: I, too, will take from the crest of the cedar, from its topmost branches tear off a tender shoot, and plant it on a high and lofty mountain; on the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it. It shall put forth branches and bear fruit, and become a majestic cedar. Birds of every kind shall dwell beneath it, every winged thing in the shade of its boughs. And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the LORD, bring low the high tree, lift high the lowly tree, wither up the green tree, and make the withered tree bloom. As I, the LORD, have spoken, so will I do.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16

R. (cf. 2a) Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praise to your name, Most High, To proclaim your kindness at dawn and your faithfulness throughout the night.

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

The just one shall flourish like the palm tree, like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow. They that are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

They shall bear fruit even in old age; vigorous and sturdy shall they be, Declaring how just is the LORD, my rock, in whom there is no wrong.

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

Reading 2 2 Cor 5:6-10

Brothers and sisters: We are always courageous, although we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yet we are courageous, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord. Therefore, we aspire to please him, whether we are at home or away. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil.

Gospel Mk 4:26-34

Jesus said to the crowds: "This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and through it all the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come."

He said, "To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it? It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade." With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it. Without parables he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private.

All of the readings today depend upon images of nature to make their point. They prompted me to think about my Dad who had a green thumb...Happy Father's Day to all you fathers, and you men who are father figures in people's lives. God Bless You....Well as I was saying, my Dad had a gift for growing all kinds of plants, indoors and out. Some of my earliest memories are of being in a garden helping him.

Today's first parable in the Gospel tells us that a farmer scatters seeds on the land and then waits. His ordinary life continues. He would ...“sleep and rise, night and day, and through it all the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord, the land yields fruit...” The farmer worked hard, but then he waited for the mysterious process to take place.

When we hear today's Gospel parables, as always there is a “catch”....and, it is not obvious. If we think it is obvious and clear, then we are probably missing the point. Jesus' parables are meant to challenge our way of thinking about the world and God's desire for this world.

In this parable Jesus compares the everyday miracle of plants growing to the kingdom of God. Try as we may, the kingdom of heaven is in God's hands. Perhaps we can help by nurturing the faith that was planted in us, but it is God who does the work. Someday, God willing, we will see the harvest of the heavenly kingdom. For Christians, God's work has been our salvation through Jesus, and if it is planted in us at Baptism, we can trust that God...as we heard in the First reading...will accomplish it! This should give us great hope!

Over the last 10 years I have talked about my father in my homilies several times. Today I would like to tell you the rest of the story because I can see that if we trust in God He will accomplish wonderful things in our lives. I remember sharing that when we moved to Georgia from Illinois in 1980, my Dad was one person I didn't miss. He had

a way of verbally abusing people that I didn't like. I loved my father, but I didn't like him. Within a year after we moved, my mother was diagnosed with Cancer...it explained why she never came to visit us here. My father stopped working and stayed home to take care of her for nearly two years as the Cancer took its toll. Seeing how dedicated he was caring for my Mom, I realized how much he loved her, and my sisters and I. That began the forgiveness process that rebuilt our relationship for the next 20 years. My father was at my Ordination and he heard my first homily here at St. Brendan's. Then five months later he died while leaving his Lutheran Church one Sunday morning. While we were going through his effects, we found his baptismal certificate...needless to say I was very happy to discover he was baptized Catholic! I asked the minister if I could assist in the funeral service...he said no, and that was the right thing because in retrospect I was in no condition emotionally to do it anyway. But, then he asked me if I could do the committal service at the cemetery because he wasn't able to go. I turned to the funeral director, who was Catholic, and he had the book, a stole and the holy water ready to go. I like to say that my Dad was Baptized Catholic and buried Catholic, and he wandered around a lot in between.☺ I also like to say that God will amaze us with glimpses of His heavenly kingdom if we will only trust Him.

In the Gospel's 2nd parable, the tiny mustard seed (about the size of a pinhead) grows to be a great shrub or even a tree, one that is taller than a man's head! The white mustard species is well known in Israel to grow to ten or twelve feet high with a stem the size of a man's arm! Well how does this apply to the kingdom of God? We are small. The movements of the Holy Spirit in us can be so modest as to be nearly disregarded. Yet if we are patient, if we watch for growth within us, the Spirit gradually will surge up and will let us together yield much fruit. Jesus is saying that the kingdom starts out small like a mustard seed planted in each of us and grows, and grows. Jesus also knew something not so obvious about mustard bushes....they are like weeds. Once they grow and drop their seeds, it is almost impossible to get rid of them. In other words, nothing

will be able to eliminate the kingdom once it has been planted....because Jesus Christ is the one who planted it!

Growth is a miracle in plants and trees, but it is even more a miracle in the growing goodness and grace that is God's kingdom in each one of us!!

So today, please, tell your father that you love him. That was the last thing I said to mine.