

## 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time – June 13<sup>th</sup> 2021

### A Reflection by Fr Sylvester O'Flynn OFM Cap., Rochestown, Cork

#### **The Power of Little Seeds**

There are many priests, teachers and parents who feel totally inadequate in the face of today's society. The answers of yesterday seem to have no relationship with the questions of today. Many people are finding it hard to hold on to any faith in the Church. They struggle to see evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit at work.

Jesus began his mission by announcing a big project which he called the kingdom of God. This was a call to reject the misleading lies of the devil and to base our lives on the law of God. So, he called us to repent and believe in the Gospel. To repent literally means to think again and to change over to the teaching and living example of Jesus himself.

As his career developed it became clear that Project Kingdom would not be simple or instantaneous. His favoured way of speaking about the kingdom was in stories that would be remembered. Most of them were introduced by saying what the kingdom of God is like. We have two of these parables in today's Mass (Mark 4:26-34).

#### **Patient growth**

The first parable is about the need for patience when growth is slow. Patience does not come easily to us today. Technology has changed our lives in many ways. We have light, heating and music at the flick of a switch: instant communication with any part of the world: a tablet for virtually every pain. And yet there are times when there is no instant answer. We need patience. Jesus looked to the fields around him for a parable on the subject. Quite a lot happens between planting and harvesting, so the farmer has to let nature take its course. The growth of the kingdom of God goes on through day and night: days when there is great progress and nights when there are periods of spiritual recession. We are experiencing a spiritual winter here in Western Europe at the moment, but there are other regions where religion is flourishing. In the garden there are some plants that require nights of hard frost during winter, frosts that hasten the decay of compost which enriches the earth. We must trust in God's providence that our spiritual winter will bring about a healthier Church.

#### **Tiny Seeds**

The second parable about the growth of the kingdom takes the example of the tiny mustard seed. It is so tiny that it looks like yellow dust. But unlike the dust it is full of potential for life. Being so light it can be wafted a great distance by the wind, so much so that there were areas where it was forbidden to plant the

seed lest the mustard bush take over the neighbouring fields. The application of the parable tells us that while the project of the kingdom is big yet the means to its implementation will involve many small gestures and actions. It is like the advertisement which said think globally but act locally.

### **Mother Teresa**

The life of Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta is a great example. Instead of being overwhelmed by the massive scandal of millions dying from hunger or basic medical care, she picked up one dying woman off the street to ensure that she had a dignified death. Her action inspired others. Her motto was to do the little thing with a lot of love. Do something beautiful for God.

### **Mary's Meals**

Two brothers in Scotland who worked in a fish farm were appalled when the television news showed the dreadful conditions of people during the Balkan conflict in 1992. They organised an event in their back shed to collect food and blankets. The response was far beyond expectations. This was the beginning of Mary's Meals, a charitable organization which now feeds more than a million school children every day, many of whom would not be in school unless they get food there.

Some little seeds of goodness have worldwide results, others may have a little result and other charitable actions seem to pass unnoticed. I say they seem to pass unnoticed, but God takes note. Remember the parable about the last judgement. People will be amazed when they discover that God is rewarding them for a cup of water, a visit to a lonely person, even the smallest act of kindness.

If every Christian concentrated on kindness, helpfulness, forgiveness and any kind of goodness, instead of an exodus from the Church we might see people asking what do you Christians have. In the early days of the Church, people remarked how these Christians love one another.

What do we Christians have? I believe that through our baptism we have the seeds of the Resurrection planted in us. We are called to rise above the anti-life values that threaten society. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit in the Church. I know that there have been shocking scandals which call out for humble repentance. There are weeds in the garden but there are far more beautiful flowers. The vast, vast majority of organizations involved in social work ... Vincent de Paul, Simon Community, Focus Ireland, Trocaire, Threshold etc. have one thing in common. They were founded by Catholics.

We may not be called to a heroic deed or a big project, but we are called to light a little candle of friendliness or attention. And if every one of us lit a candle of charitable action, the world would be a brighter place.

### **Reflection**

Where I walk or work, where I play or pray, in the little acre of God that I till, is there anybody less hungry because I am there?