

## Pastoral Reflection

June 10, 2021

In our Gospel passage for this coming Sunday, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to the growth of seeds (Mark 4:26-34). The measured development of a tiny seed into a mature plant also provides us insight into our personal, lifelong spiritual development responding to God's grace. Christ reaches out to our hearts through the endless love that he showers upon us, and our response to that divine love allows us to grow in holiness.

As we learn in Lumen Gentium, ("Christ, the Light of Nations") from Vatican Council II: "God has poured out his love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit ...therefore, the first and most necessary gift is charity, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor because of him." (Par. 42). Lumen Gentium further instructs that in order for that divine charity to grow in our hearts like a good seed and produce fruit, we should: (1) willingly hear the word of God and carry out his will by the help of his grace; (2) frequently participate in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and (3) constantly apply ourselves to prayer, active loving service to others and all the virtues. (Par. 42).

Responding to God's loving grace and growing in holiness can at times be a daunting task for each of us. Certainly, during the pandemic many of us have experienced both major personal adversity and loss, as well as a multitude of daily challenges. God provides the grace to meet these challenges and to sustain our spiritual growth, including bestowing upon us the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit that we receive in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. These divine gifts, such as understanding, fortitude, good counsel and wisdom, enable us as faithful and loving disciples to discern and obey the divine will of Christ, and to share his loving way with our family members and our neighbor in need.

Jesus teaches us in our Gospel passage today through the parable of the mustard seed -- the smallest of seeds when it is sown in the ground, but once 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." (Mark 4:32). From the most humble of beginnings of his Incarnation on earth, through his passion, death for us on the cross and glorious resurrection, Jesus' message of love and truth, and the Holy Catholic Church, has grown and spread to people of all nations. If we respond to that boundless divine love, like the birds dwelling in the shade of the tree of the parable, we will live in peace and happiness with Christ as members of his everlasting kingdom.

Best wishes to you and your family for a blessed and peaceful summer,

Deacon Don