

Homily for the 11th Sunday of the Year

After the Easter Season and the two solemnities of Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi we return today to the 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time. We are of course living in times that are anything but ordinary as the struggles between viruses and vaccines continue. There are competing voices, all wanting good in some form or other, growth in the economy, return to full time employment, increased safety against covid. For some the Government is being too cautious, for others too risky. This is the context in which we listen to God's word today.

St Paul in the second reading wrote we live by faith and not by sight, in other words, we don't know everything. Jesus emphasises this in the first of the two parables, reminding us that we sow seeds but we don't know how they grow, but grow they do, as the magnificent cedar tree in the first reading, the swaying palm tree in the psalm, and the mustard tree, grown from the smallest of seeds, in the gospel all demonstrate. Much of the growth is at first unseen, and so the farmer entrusts the seeds to the earth, and trusts that they will grow, having a sense of gratitude and even excitement when the first shoots appear. Then that the work begins, fertilizing, weeding, watering.

However, Jesus isn't giving a lesson in horticulture, rather he is speaking in parables inviting his hearers to reflect on something they understand and relate it to the presence and growth of God's reign in their lives. Mark's was the first gospel to be written at a time when the situation facing the Christians was demanding and oppressive. The temptation, given their small numbers and the might of the opposition of the Roman Empire, would be to give up, especially if they didn't see any growth. They could not possibly have thought that two millennia later there would be well in excess of two billion Christians!

If we return to the present day, this weekend members of the G7 and some other invited leaders have been meeting in Cornwall, under the leadership of Boris Johnson. Among the items on the agenda are, climate change, the debts owed by developing countries, rebuilding and developing the whole world after Covid and getting the vaccines world wide. The decisions they make and their ability to take other countries along with them will affect, for better or worse, billions of people today. They certainly need our prayers and the guidance of the Holy Spirit if real and lasting change is to take place. They also need our support and our willingness to make personal and national sacrifices to bring about transformation in the fortunes of people in other parts of the world. As a Church we cannot dismiss these global issues, and pretend they are someone else's responsibility. That would be to work against the development and growth of God's kingdom. Like the cedar and the mustard seed, God's reign grows within the reality of our human condition, inviting us, urging us to move forward, transforming our world. This transformation will be a sign of the reign of God unfolding within human history in our own time.

Bidding Prayers for the 11th Sunday of the Year

Celebrant:

With seeds scattered and sown, we till the soil of God's kingdom with our prayers for the needs of our world.

Reader:

For the Church – that it will always remember that it is at the service of God's kingdom, promoting peace and justice, and encouraging gospel values.

Lord in your mercy

For the leaders attending the G7 summit in Cornwall – that they will be truly global in their discussions and in the decisions they make, knowing that their decisions will affect the lives of so many people.

Lord in your mercy

For a greater appreciation of God's creation – that we will always remember that we are stewards of creation, preserving precious resources for future generations.

Lord in your mercy

For all those who suffer in body, mind and spirit – that they, their families and carers will receive the love and support they need at this time.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the covid pandemic, for Marie Therese Parisse who died last Wednesday and Veronica Long, Nellie Wood, Raymond Long, Johanna Friedrich, John Collins and Dympna Howell whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

God of all creation, your loving providence provides for the growth of your Kingdom. Tend to us in your kindness and water the seeds of life with the truth of the Gospel. Open our hearts to perceive the mysterious ways you are active and alive in our world today. Through Christ our Lord. Amen