

Sunday Homily

26 JULY 2020

YEAR A

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

“The kingdom of heaven is like...”

Matthew 13:31

Illustration

Many gardens are looking their best now, with flowerbeds in full bloom offering a magnificent profusion of colour, and vegetable gardens producing scrumptious, mouth-watering crops.

There are so many gardens to enjoy: our own (if we are keen gardeners) or, perhaps, our neighbours' (if we're not!). Then there are those truly wonderful gardens, some associated with grand houses, which deservedly draw in countless hosts of admiring visitors.

As we wander round our gardens, enjoying the rich colours and beautiful shapes and scents of flowers, or anticipating the tastes of newly cropped fruit and vegetables, perhaps questions – unspoken and marvelling – come into mind, questions like: “Does it really all begin with a small seed? How does anyone know what to sow, where, and when to sow it? Where does one start?”

Gospel Teaching

Today's Gospel tells of Jesus “sowing seeds” – being a gardener, if you like. In nearly all his parables he “sows seeds”, seeds of wisdom and encouragement, seeds of knowledge and confidence, which will grow in the hearts and minds of his listeners – among whom we, of course, number. They are seeds that if (when!) nurtured will flourish, and be fruitful.

Typically, he uses for his “seeds” everyday examples, things his listeners would recognise and know: the tiny seed which grows to become a strong bush; the single cell of yeast helping “flat” ingredients to become a wholesome loaf. He tells of folk who, in their everyday surroundings, spot real treasure (in the field and among the pearls), treasure which they value sufficiently to give up all else to gain. And to people with fisherman-neighbours, he spoke of a huge sea harvest, fish of every kind.

The “seeds” that Jesus is sowing here are seeds about the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is a challenging concept for many of us, but Jesus' words affirm how a smidgen of faith, a seed of love – our kingdom faith – if nurtured, will grow into something big and good. He shows

that this kingdom faith is of great worth – “beyond price”, one might say – something greatly to be desired, beyond our known measures of wealth. And the kingdom is all-embracing: there’s a place – and room – for us all.

Application

In recognising Jesus sowing “seeds” here it is important to note that, whilst he may well be looking ahead to the end product – the magnificently colourful flowerbed in full bloom, or the vegetable garden heaving with prize winning crops – he is in fact, in the parables of our Gospel today, focusing on the starting point: the tiny seed which grows to become a vibrant plant, the minuscule yeast cell which acts to produce a wholesome crunchy loaf.

Sometimes gardeners will start with a seed, and watch it become a lovely flourishing plant. Sometimes they will take a well-developed strong root clump, and divide it, each small part itself growing into a thriving plant.

Who first sowed a seed of faith in us? Did our faith come through what our family and friends shared with us and rooted in us? However we received it, and however small and frail it may sometimes seem, it has brought us into the kingdom.

If we take nothing else from today’s Gospel reading we must recognise that the small seed of faith in us, that small cell of faith working in us and helping us to grow, the single jewel, the small but rich treasure, is our kingdom faith. As kingdom faith, its potential to grow and grow is unlimited. And grow it will, as we grow and grow in Jesus Christ, and so enhance the kingdom.

The small seed of faith growing and working in us does indeed make us part of the kingdom – a great multiracial, multicultural, multi-generational harvest of all sizes and scents, of all colours and shapes.

The most basic of meals or the grandest of banquets is enriched by the inclusion of vegetables great or small. Our gardens and wayside hedgerows, flower arrangements at home (or in church), are all enriched by small flowers as well as large blooms, the hidden beauties as well as the bright colours.

So, too, is God’s kingdom. You – we – are all part of the kingdom, God’s kingdom.

Let’s nurture this kingdom faith in us. Above all, let us sow and share the kingdom seeds with all around us, and so help God’s kingdom flourish and grow. Let’s do it – today.

