



## PARISH OF ST. AGATHA

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### POPE: DISCOVER THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN OUR LIVES.

Pope Francis reminds us to have attentive eyes in order to see how God's hidden presence is always there and at work in our lives and history. He reflected on today's Gospel (Mark 4:26-34) about the two parables Jesus tells that open up an understanding of the mystery of God and how human events unfold. The parables show us that everyday life, which sometimes may seem monotonous or difficult, is always "inhabited by God's hidden presence", he noted, and it takes our attentive eyes to be able "to seek and find God in all things".

### GOD AT WORK IN OUR LIVES

Recalling how Jesus compares the Kingdom of God, His presence dwelling in the heart of all things, to the tiny mustard seed which becomes the tallest of trees, Pope Francis noted that is how God works in our lives and the world. The challenge is that our busy lives can sometimes prevent us from seeing this reality - but "God is at work, like a good little seed that silently and slowly germinates" to become "a lush tree, which gives life and rest to everyone". He went on to say that the seeds of our good works may seem small by comparison, "yet all that is good pertains to God", and good "always grows in a humble, hidden, often invisible way".

### DISCOVER GOD'S PRESENCE

This parable should give us confidence, the Pope said, despite the many times in life when we might be discouraged by thinking, mistakenly, that good is weak and evil is having the last word. At the same time, he said we should not be overcome with doubts either, even if we work hard and the desired results or changes never happen. The Gospel calls on us continually to look at ourselves and reality with eyes wide open that can see beyond appearances and "discover the presence of God who as humble love is always at work in the soil of our life and that of history", the Pope observed, underscoring that with this confidence we have "the strength to go forward every day, patiently, sowing the good that will bear fruit". This attitude and approach is what is needed to recover from the pandemic, he said, the confidence of "being in God's hands" in order to rebuild, start again with "patience and perseverance".

### GOD'S ACTION IN OUR LIVES

The Pope also observed that we need to be aware even in the Church of the "weeds of doubt" seen with the crisis of faith and various projects or initiatives that do not seem to work out. The help here, he said, is to always remember that the results of sowing does not depend on us; rather, "they depend on the action of God" and it is our concern simply "to sow, with love, dedication, patience". The force of the seed is divine, he noted, while the other parable in today's Gospel explains how the farmer sows the seed and is amazed at how it "grows spontaneously, day and night, when he least expects it", showing "there is always hope", even in the most infertile soil. In conclusion, the Pope prayed that Our Lady, the Lord's humble handmaid, might "teach us to see the greatness of God who works in the little things", to remain hopeful and trusting in Him every day. (Vatican News).

### THE MUSTARD SEED

In the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:26-34), Jesus is explaining that in baptism, the Kingdom of God is planted in us, like a small seed in our hearts. We have a duty to cultivate it and allow it to grow, even when we are sleeping! In reality, Jesus plants Himself, who is Love and Mercy, in our hearts. Like the earthenware vessels overflowing with new wine in the wedding feast at Cana, we are created as holy vessels, full of the Holy Spirit, to pour out Love and Mercy to our neighbours. Our Christian vocation is to help each other and become a place of refuge for those in need, such as providing shelter, doing good works, practicing charity, love, almsgiving and forgiveness. Just like the tall Mustard Tree, that provided shelter and rest for the weary birds and creatures of the earth. The Tabernacle of Love and Mercy is the Sacred Heart of Jesus. From it, flowed Love and Mercy in the form of Blood and Water, which are the Sacraments of the Church.

### THE ETERNAL KINGDOM BEGINS ON EARTH

Baptism is the gateway to all the Sacraments of the Catholic Church. They are accompanied by the gift of Faith, which helps us to respond to God's call. Faith is also like a seed and must grow within us. Faith is like a divine oxygen, giving us new Life to live and breathe on earth. It enables us to believe in the Words and Teachings of Christ. Faith is like the engine that drives our undying growing belief in God and the promise of Resurrection from the dead. The Eternal Kingdom beyond this world is vast and without borders and boundaries, but Jesus plants a tiny part of this divine Kingdom in our hearts now. Jesus is the King-dom because He is **Christ the King. And Dom** is the Latin word meaning **Lord**. In the Our Father, we pray, Thy King-dom come, meaning, Thy, Christ the King and Lord, come - into my heart now. The Eternal Kingdom or Reign of God is already here! Jesus speaks of the coming of God's Kingdom as both a present event and an event which will be revealed at the end of time.

### GOOD V EVIL

The Kingdom of God cannot co-exist with the kingdom of sin, which stops us spiritually growing into the likeness of Christ. Our faith grows within us even when asleep, but if we do not cultivate it, then the devils weed and thorns will choke it. The Sacrament of Confession weeds out the sinful thorns of our sins, leaving our faith to grow stronger which benefits our spiritual body. Jesus asks us to look at this passing world through the eyes of our faith.

### GROW TALL IN LOVE AND MERCY

The theme in today's Gospel (Mark 4:26-34), is to understand that the Kingdom of God is His divine presence in the Person of Jesus. He is Eternal Life. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Jesus establishes His Kingdom in us now, and expects it to grow and increase in His likeness. To grow into perfect Holiness and become full of Grace requires His help. We cannot do it alone because our bodies and minds can crave for sin. When we enter into His Sacramental Presence of Divine Mercy in Confession, we are acknowledging our imperfections by confessing our sins. Jesus accepts our contrite and repentant hearts and returns them back into the state of original holiness, grace and perfection. He restores the grace and faith we squandered through sin. Divine Mercy restores our sinful disfigured hearts and souls into His Divine perfect Image. An unrepentant soul cannot get into Heaven. Let us not waste the sacred opportunity to repent now and imitate the Prodigal Son's humility and common sense by returning to the Father for Salvation.

### OUR DUTY TO SERVICE

God has gone to a lot of trouble for us, by taking on our Human nature and dying on the Cross, so as to take a stake in all our lives. No human love can match this act. Jesus has died for me to bring about a New Life. What am I doing for Him? If we expect Mercy from God then we must show mercy to each other. We must grow in love and forgive each other, if we are to find forgiveness from Christ. We also have to grow in Holiness. What makes the Suffering Holy Souls in Purgatory Holy - is their total obedience to God's Reign and their willingness now to unite their sufferings with the sufferings of Christ. Suffering is a divine currency that will purchase us a place in Heaven and help purify our souls here on earth. Christ's Suffering brought about Salvation/Eternal Life.

### MUSTARD SEED

Jesus uses the tiny mustard seed as an example, because in time, it grows into an enormous full tree, with outstretched branches, that facilitate creatures in need. In the same way, the tiny seed of faith and His divine loving and merciful presence planted in our hearts, is expected to grow to full spiritual maturity in His Image. This happens practicing our faith through holiness and prayer, and acts of charity. The armour of faith protects us from the attacks of Satan. Authentic Faith is letting go of our freewill and putting all our trust in God's Divine Will on earth. Faith is our source of patience and spiritual strength, informing us to fear God, especially if we are not prepared for the Day of Judgement. The supreme act of faith and trust in God, is when we don't abandon His Church, in times of suffering or in pandemic uncertainty. We have been *told* to do no more *than our duty*. Love God and love and forgive our neighbour. God bless, Fr Brendan.