

11th Sunday per Annum - B
Ezekiel 7:22-24;
II Corinthians 5:6-10;
Mark 4:26-34
Little Flower - 6/17/18

My Brothers and Sisters,

The parish staff and I want to wish all fathers a very happy and blessed Father's Day. Parents play a special role in the lives of their children. Parents are co-creators with God of their children. All parents are called by God to help their children become holy, i.e., to become the-best-version-of-themselves, the persons God has called them to be. Today, then, we want to celebrate all parents, but especially fathers and those men who help lead and guide young people.

Both today's reading from the Prophet Ezekiel and the parables in today's Gospel prophesy the growth of God's kingdom.

The reading from Ezekiel emphasizes God's power and activity in growing his kingdom. God takes the tender shoot from the crest of the cedar and plants it on his holy mountain. It then puts forth branches and bears fruit and becomes a majestic cedar. Likewise, in the Gospel the scattered seed appears to grow on its own. The unstated point is that God causes its growth.

In several homilies over the last few months, I have mentioned some of the challenges the Church and parishes are facing today. Several times I have mentioned that all of the recent Popes have proposed evangelization and re-evangelization as responses to today's challenges. Nevertheless, it would be very easy to become discouraged by these challenges.

Today's first reading and Gospel remind us that we are not solely responsible for the Church or for our parish. Today's readings proclaim God's role in building up the kingdom of God and the Church. There is a passage in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians that captures this perfectly. Paul wrote,

What is Apollos, after all, and what is Paul? Ministers through whom you became believers, just as the Lord assigned each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth. Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are equal.... For we are God's co-workers; you are God's field, God's building [3:5-9].

We are all God's co-workers. The Church is God's Church.

Today's reading from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthian reminds us of three important truths. First, Paul reminds us that in this life, we are away from the Lord. For Paul and for us, this creates mixed feelings. We all want to live as long and as well as we possibly can. Most of us are at least somewhat afraid of dying. However, our faith teaches us that our life after this life will be greater than we can even imagine. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "'What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart,... God has prepared for those who love him'" [I Cor. 2:9].

Second, St. Paul reminds us that during our lives on earth we walk by faith and not by sight. In other words, we are not going to be able to prove our faith, nor are we going to have the answers to all our questions. Therefore, we often struggle with faith and with life's questions. However, when we die and are with the Lord, we will see clearly. Our faith will be fulfilled in vision. As Paul put it in First Corinthians, "*At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known*" [13:12].

Finally, St. Paul also reminds us that we are accountable to God for the choices we make. In this life, we can sometimes avoid responsibility for our choices. When we appear before the judgment seat of Christ, when we are alone with God, God will hold us accountable for our choices. At the same time, we must never forget that the quality most proper to God is mercy.

My brothers and sisters, once again, we wish all fathers a happy and blessed Father's Day.