

Homily St Pius & St Anthony 11th Sunday Ordinary Year B

Here we go being taught by Jesus Himself about the Kingdom of God (its appearance and maybe even in its inner workings-as best as we can humanly understand it)! I love His parables and that the fact that He teaches in parables. I think of parables as Jesus saying, "Let me draw you a picture" or "Let's chart this-graph this; pictorially display it". Notice how he introduces it: "*this is how it is* with the Kingdom of God" (4:26) and second time, "*To what can we compare* the Kingdom of God..." (4:30), Both these **teaching** examples of parables describe the Kingdom as 'seeds growing' in first case emphasizing the mystery of *how* seeds release life & growth..... under '*just right*' initial conditions (is it right soil, right temperature, right moisture level –and whatever secret sauce God only knows) along with trusting and minimal maintenance intervention, then 'voila' or 'ta da' life emerges and flourishes. And in the second parable, what 's emphasized is the surprise of what comes next in the seed's ongoing growth perhaps completely unseen or unprojected from the initial set-up – who can imagine a mighty oak from a tiny acorn, or a giant mustard bush from the tiniest of seeds. For that matter, who can ever see the abundantly variegated vegetation (height-width-3D depth) of a plant from the miniscule seed (can I say 1-dimension seed-some are small as dots-only way you see them is on white background!) All that from little this. Yet, Jesus says 'so it is with the Kingdom of God'. Sit back and be surprised! He is telling us that faith will take us places we could never predict or see coming. That is faith. We do our simple duty (plant or water- and be careful not to intrusively meddle, and trustingly let it be). The kingdom is God's to rule, and like our faith it will take care of it. It will grow of its own, and oh how it will grow..... mustard seed from tiniest to greatest. Trust God, and watch what happens. Amazing.

It truly is: the mysterious growth of life, the superabundance displayed in the developmental process of things- It is mind-blowing. Yet, it is all God's design As a kid in Catholic elementary school (in science class-which was broad we'd cover seeds and plant's photosynthesis and the later cover the sun and the planetary system), but we had great hands-on demonstrations or we called them 'science experiments', one of the earliest I remember was each child growing a few seeds in a simple jar labeled and set in the window. We used old glass-remember those-Gerber baby food jars (carpenters love them in their workshop too as nail storage), and we placed either corn or bean (bigger seeds as I remember them-our hands were small) and we wet a paper towel pushed around

the inside wall of the jar and we squeezed our seed between the towel and the glass- kept it wet, set in the window sill and we watched-we had a journal and drew its daily shape- we know what happened. Some even grew out and well above the lid-at that point we were to take them home and plant them.... But that was a demonstration for us of life's mystery- the fact that God planted all of that future growth and development inside/within the smallest of packages-seed.

So Jesus is saying, "So it is with faith...." It grows of its own and it grows in stages over time. Even if you have but a little; relax, nurture it (but don't overdo it) and let God, do God's work.... And don't expect the flower first, but count on sequentially, just a stem, then a leaf, then branches, and then flower-fruit and finish. That is faith. Going with God, we do our simple duty, going along with His design and we trust (watch and wait along the way). Faith carries across the line. I especially love how Jesus describes the 'sower' after planting, in verse 26-27 as 'sleep and rise night and day and the seed sprout and grow, **he knows not how**' but he knows it grows-he sees it gradually taking shape and developing, just doesn't know **how**?' So it is with us, I don't have the manufacturer's product data sheet on the bean seed, but I know what I need to, to get it started and keeping my meddling down to a minimum (again with faith we don't meddle too much in its growth process or it dies out- imagine when your tender shoots pop up out of the ground, if you went out to grow the tallest tomato plant for the county fair and you used some expanding clamps to stretch the stem beyond its given growth that day... you will have two pieces of plant before you know it. maybe you can train it in a direction (tie it up to protect it) but you can't physically pull more growth out of it – reminds me of the dad-farmer who had to tell his child to stay out of the cantaloupe patch, as the boy thought he was helpful everyday walking through and checking the patch and reporting to dad the number of melons, but when the dad passed by he saw yellowing rotting cantaloupes where the child disturbed the vines breaking off the melons; that was too much intervention and meddling with the process of growth/faith.

So Jesus says, keep to the minimum duties, water, watch and simply wait. It grows of itself. Let God do His work. And here is the real power of faith, "Oh, how it grows. Isn't it amazing sometimes how fast a plant can mature and spread, propagate and flower? Just think of Dandelions, that spring up a foot overnight or by afternoon growing a cotton ball on top of foot stick, Or I have recently been hearing about Bamboo! What? That it can grow from 3 inches to 30 inches a

night! And that it has a higher tensile strength than steel! (though it has building weaknesses-insect and water degradation as a replacement material) - talk about faith size of mustard seed able to move mountains- oh I can see its prospects! But Jesus' parables teach us how life's advance by faith comes from within, and we need to trust our creator to guide our growth in stages. Faith will accomplish all works, slowly, powerfully and effectively. Even though we may feel we only have that tiniest of faith-mustard seed- still with proper patience, daily attention- yet not overanxious meddling, the seed will grow. Our faith will develop, strengthen and ultimately bear fruit. Yes, it is okay that it starts small; maybe it all does; but we start we must; and God will provide the growth.