



Bringing Home the Word



Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 14, 2015

Growing From Seed to Plan Is a Mystery

By Janel Esker

Throughout my pregnancy, friends shared books describing the week-by-week growth of a fetus. One week the eyelashes are developing, another week the fingernails are fully grown, another week thumb-sucking has begun.

It's fascinating to envision what's occurring within your growing belly. Of course, these books are careful to note that every baby's development is different. Some babies kick harder, some develop faster. As much as we know about fetal development, each child's

growth in the womb is still a mysterious, unique process.

Jesus speaks about this kind of mysterious growth in the Gospel today when he compares the growth of the reign of God to agricultural growth. Obviously a farmer scatters seed, cares for it, and harvests it, but how it grows from seed to plant is a mystery the farmer cannot see. It happens underground, known only to God. The mustard seed is a similar mystery—it's a very tiny seed, but it grows into a very large plant. We know it happens and we know how to help it grow, but the actual growing process is mysterious and hidden.

The reign of God in our hearts follows the same pattern. It's a unique collaboration between our efforts and the slow, mysterious work of God. We have to practice patterns of prayer, openness to the Spirit, and gentleness of heart. And then God does the mysterious work of growth—drawing us close and nurturing us with love. As with each unique fetus, the growth is different—we can't look at someone else and berate ourselves for not being as holy as she or as spiritually developed as he.

God takes us where we are and grows us at a pace that is ours alone. †

A Word From Pope Francis

“Lord, look, there are good things, but there are also things that aren't good. Jesus, do you trust me? I am a sinner...” This doesn't scare Jesus. What distances him is one who is two-faced: showing him/herself as just in order to cover up hidden sin. “But I go to Church, every Sunday, and I...” Yes, we can say all of this. But if your heart isn't just, if you don't do justice, if you don't love those who need love, if you do not live according to the spirit of the Beatitudes, you are not Catholic. You are a hypocrite. Can Jesus trust himself to me? In prayer, let us ask him: Lord, do you trust me?



Excerpted from the pope's homily at the Roman Parish of Santa Maria Madre del Redentore, March 8, 2015



Lord, you are the bread of life for the world. Help me be your bread of love, compassion, and peace.
Amen.

Sunday Readings

Ezekiel 17:22–24

Birds of every kind shall dwell beneath it.

2 Corinthians 5:6–10

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Mark 4:26–34

The mustard seed is the smallest of all the seeds on earth.

My Children Are Better Christians Than I Am

By Kathleen M. Basi

One ordinary afternoon, I pulled up to a stoplight—an ordinary mom driving an ordinary minivan with three small children chattering unintelligibly in the back. Beside our minivan stood a man in a camouflage jacket holding a cardboard sign that read, HOMELESS—HUNGRY—ANYTHING HELPS.

At moments like these, the wisdom of the world wrestles with the wisdom of Christ. You're not supposed to give beggars money, because they might use it to buy drugs; instead, you're supposed to support the shelters that care for them. Still, I can't escape the conviction that when Christ said, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine" (Matthew 25:40), he didn't intend for us to just scatter our largesse from a safe distance. He meant for us to take a risk and look into his face, person to person.

Yet we hardly ever do. We stare straight ahead and pretend we don't even see them, because eye contact with a beggar is a signal that we're ready to open our wallets.

As I gripped the steering wheel in an agony of indecision, I realized the noise in the back seat had shifted. My children were waving enthusiastically at the homeless man while they laughed and shouted, "Hi! Hi! Hi!"

In that moment, Jesus' words about becoming like children rang in my mind: "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you care for the poor?
- What do you do when confronted directly with a poor person?

and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). It was in this moment that those words made sense for the first time. *My children are better Christians than I am*, I thought.

Obviously it's easier for kids than for us. We're the ones who have money to give. We know, or at least we *think* we know, the whole story—the mental illness, the addictions, and the bad

choices that land people in such a place. Kids don't get caught up in all that, so they simply acknowledge the face of Christ. Maybe that's why Jesus urged us to be childlike. Often, adults see a problem and without realizing it, throw a roadblock in the way of solutions. Perhaps our mission as a Church is to stop focusing on the obstacles and strip every question down to the essentials: *How do I acknowledge the face of Christ?* After all, the face of poverty is the face of Christ. And regardless of where I give money, I still have a responsibility to acknowledge his presence.

These days I keep a few singles in my wallet, and I roll down my window when I see a person begging at a stoplight. Maybe that person will use the money wisely, maybe not. I'm certainly not giving enough to help much. But at least it gives me the reason to be a little more childlike—and make eye contact with Jesus.



WEEKDAY READINGS

June 15–20

Mon.	Weekday 2 Corinthians 6:1–10 / Matthew 5:38–42	Thurs.	Weekday 2 Corinthians 11:1–11 / Matthew 6:7–15
Tues.	Weekday 2 Corinthians 8:1–9 / Matthew 5:43–48	Fri.	Weekday 2 Corinthians 11:18, 21–30 Matthew 6:19–23
Wed.	Weekday 2 Corinthians 9:6–11 / Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18	Sat.	Weekday 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 / Matthew 6:24–34