

**Homily For Tuesday of the 30th Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1**  
**St Peter's 8:30 am/7:00 pm Masses - October 31, 2023**

**Romans 8:18-25** "If we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

**Psalms 126** "The Lord has done great things for us. May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy."

**Luke 13:18-21** "The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. It became a tree for the birds to nest. "

**The Kingdom of God Is Real**

**Introduction**

It is always a mystery to me that the culture around us at this time of year takes pleasure in displays of death and demons. I have to admit a certain sadness. It should be a most wonderful time. We are about to celebrate our brothers and sisters in heaven tomorrow, then pray for those in purgatory, who are undergoing a final purification so that they may enter into the joy of heaven. But today, most of the images will be dark. There is a kind of darkness in us, I think.

**Luke**

There is some interest in 'near death experiences', NDEs. I just received an email invitation to listen to Fr. Robert Spitzer discuss this phenomenon. He is a wonderful Catholic commentator on seeing the big picture of creation and eternity. Today's ad reads: "Today, we'll hear the story of a woman named Anita with cancer, who entered a coma and can now recount leaving her body and viewing the world from outside it. After a brief journey into the afterlife and 30 hours in a coma, something had changed – she was cancer-free.

I view such stories with a little bit of skepticism. But then I ask myself, why would I think that God cannot act in such a way, to provide little insights into the kingdom beyond this life, that promises joy and peace. Is that not what our Lord, Jesus Christ, does everywhere he goes and with everyone he meets? Jesus provides many different kinds of images which give insight into that joyful heavenly realm, to a people longing for a sign. This is a good question for our prayer: "Lord, tell me about the kingdom of God."

Jesus looks for things close by to make the comparisons to the coming and present kingdom. It's like those things only so much more. It's like yeast that leavens the flour to make bread. It's like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds.

These are metaphors for the small early Christian community, which ends up having an influence on the world far beyond its size and number, to the point that millions of others will make their home in. The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven are also images of the Spirit which gives life to the Church.

We might say right here today that the kingdom of God is like bread and wine which is brought to the altar. God doesn't need that offering, but he transforms it into the gift of himself, Jesus body and blood, soul and divinity, which becomes our spiritual food. That's the kingdom of God right in front of our eyes, not just a parable.

## **Romans**

St. Paul describes an age of suffering as creation's labour pains, during which creation and believers groan. The spirit within us, in fact, expresses our own groaning. St. Paul reminds the Roman Church what they already should know, that sufferings of the present day, that persecution and fear and illness and alienation and loneliness and anxiety, will test us. We are, to use his powerful image, in bondage to decay. But we are God's children, animated and encouraged by the Spirit of adoption as his children.

If we look beyond this time, we will truly see that suffering really is **nothing** compared to the glory of being a child of Christ. Within the brokenness, we are invited, called, to share in the glory of the freedom of the children of God. This is our experience in the midst of suffering. It is also our hope for an eternal future. Paul points out that we are saved by this hope. If we could experience it in fullness now, we wouldn't have to hope. The psalmist understood this hope: "The Lord has done great things for us. Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy."

## Call to Conversion

The relatively small number of people whom Jesus was able to interact with personally were desperate to hang on to their hope of the fulfilment of God's promises in the Scriptures. Through the eyes of faith, they look like us. They are our brothers and sisters. We are increasingly ridiculed and cancelled in almost every public media environment. We are regularly taught to be afraid of everything around us.

War is still such a close reality. Israel is still surrounded by nations determined to destroy her. Innocent Palestinians and Ukrainians are still suffering destruction. In the mid-1960s, the late Chief Walking Buffalo of the Stoney Nakoda was well known for his wisdom: "Consider all the different kinds of trees and plants there are in the forest. There are poplars, spruce, pine, willow, cranberry, and a wide variety of flowers. But they don't fight with each other. They get along together just fine. They live in harmony. The beauty of that harmony when it is found among people is expressed in the Stoney Nakoda language by the wonderful word, *oyade* (pronounced oh-YAH-day), "town" or "community," he said. This is also the word for "peace." Thus, a community is a place where peace and harmony prevail.

Peace does not look close at hand. But, we are invited again to ponder the Kingdom of God. Shall we compare our present suffering to the future glory that awaits us? Shall we long for freedom from the bondage to sin? Shall we overcome the futility of existence without God? Shall we groan with all of creation in the hope in what is unseen? Shall we embrace the glorious life of the children of God?

Christ is the seed, carried and given birth to by Mary, who bore within her that precious seed. Christ is a tree. Christ is branches for birds to make nests. Christ is yeast. Christ is a woman. While he is as near as the things around us, our suffering makes sense. He is with us. Jesus is the most important and influential person in all of history. Imagine that, and we are his adopted brothers and sisters. With him, we cry out: Abba, Father. Be with your children. Be with us in our groaning.

## **Key Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *O Lord, I trust in your merciful love. My heart will rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord who has been bountiful with me.*

**Collect:** *Grant, we pray, almighty God that, always pondering spiritual things, we may carry out in both word and deed that which is pleasing to you.*

**Romans:** *The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We groan inwardly while we wait for adoption. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

**Psalm:** *The Lord has done great things for us. May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.*

**Luke:** *Jesus said, "What is the kingdom of God like? It is like a mustard seed that someone sowed in the garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches." Again Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is like yeast that a woman mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."*