

June 17, 2012

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time....Father's Day

Happy Father's Day to all Fathers, Grandfathers, God-Fathers!

The Gospel today is about seeding. For us as human beings we have been "seeded" by our fathers, and the genetic material of our ancestors has been passed down to us. But for many of us much more has been passed down to us from fathers. One of my earliest memories is of my father kneeling at his bedside saying his night prayers. I had to be three or four. A seed of faith was planted by that image. So, today, a blessing for fathers:

*Beyond conception may you plant other seeds of faith, of hope, of love.*

*"You with your wife "are the first and best teachers of your children in the ways of the faith!" May you be a splendid teacher. And may your children be like seedlings around your table .May they "put forth branches, and bear fruit and become like majestic cedars" (First Reading) When they grow into tall cedars and you age and decline, may you rest joyful in their shade!"*

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

I have just returned from the beautiful mountains of Montana where I conducted a Creation Spirituality Retreat for 16 adults from Connecticut, Nebraska, and Arizona. To be with, to share with, and to pray with such lay persons of such deep spirituality was a humbling experience. It reminded me once more that our church, at its grass roots level, is alive, well, and flourishing.

The news is too seldom filled with their lives. Instead the leaders of the Church, bishops and Popes occupy headlines sometimes for good and sometimes for ill. But think for a moment: The vast number of Catholic Christians are neither priests, nuns, bishops, nor Popes. The laity is the Church's presence in our world. And so many of "the faithful" "walk by faith, not by sight."

To cast seed, corn, or faith demands faith and hope. When the farmer goes out in the spring, he knows not whether tornado, or thunderstorm or drought will affect his crop. He walks by faith.

Jesus was a great observer. He spoke out of earth bound human experience. He saw the farmer carrying a sack of seeds and dropping them into the upturned land by hand. He did not speak from some high place on the temple like the Pope who speaks from the balcony in Rome, or even like the priest who mounts a pulpit. He spoke like the farmer at ground level.

The farmer is close to the seed. He has it in hand. He looks at it close up, and when he does it does not seem like much. So tiny, so dry, so bare lacking any fruit as yet. And yet the farmer walks by faith, not by sight.

And so Jesus looks at the tiny mustard seed—so insignificant and yet so filled with surprising, in fact, amazing potential.

“To whom shall we compare the Kingdom of God? It is like a mustard seed, when it is sowed in the ground is the tiniest of the seeds of the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants.”

I went to Montana filled with the news from Rome about a butler jailed and intrigue at the Vatican. There were neither TV nor radios on the mountain in Emigrant Montana. But there was evidence all around me of seed that had been planted in the hearts of the 16 retreatants and it was wondrous to see how it has matured and blossomed. It reminded me again, that at its grass roots the church as well as the Kingdom of God is thriving!

The sixteen were so diverse. Their religious experience so diverse, their ages from two young mothers to an 80 and an 83 year old. And in their midst I experienced the fulfillment of today’s responsorial psalm:

“They shall bear fruits, even in old age,  
Vigorous and sturdy shall they be..” Psalm 92

Breakfast Talk: What would I say to my dad, if he were here?

Reflection Question: Do we pay too much attention to news accounts about the “top” of the church, and not enough to the seeds of faith planted and sprouting all around us?