



There is no best time to sow the good news of the kingdom. Any time will do. Its fruit is perennial. Any act of compassion, of kindness, a word of forgiveness, a smile, a teaching that liberates, can take root and touch us and open us to the presence of the mystery of divine mercy that transforms lives and enables us to see the potential in the lives of others afresh. The good news of the kingdom is the fruit of the abiding presence of the Spirit of the creator God in the wonder and diversity of creation. It is seen in the hearts of living disciples who make this available to others through their generous lives and words, their welcoming homes, their attitudes at work, above all their capacity to forgive.

SEEDS OF THE KINGDOM

The seeds of the kingdom, if we have eyes to see, are all around us. Such seeds bear fruit in more open lives, open to others and open to encountering our strange and ever new God. Our time and our work are a time of sowing: that's what we are called to get on with. It's not our job to worry about the harvest; Jesus didn't seem to in his ministry. He seems to have the patience, pragmatism and trust of a Galilean subsistence farmer. As long as some of the seeds of the kingdom bear fruit then the world will continue to know of the good news of our merciful God. God alone decides when the ultimate harvest is ready. And we entrust that to his merciful hands. But at present what we need are more sowers, not harvesters.

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

As for me, in justice I shall behold your face; I shall be filled with the vision of your glory.

FIRST READING Isaiah 55:10-11

PSALM Psalm 64

RESPONSE **Some seed fell into rich soil and produced its crop.**

1. You care for the earth, give it water, you fill it with riches. Your river in heaven brims over to provide its grain. **R.**
2. And thus you provide for the earth; you drench its furrows, you level it, soften it with showers, you bless its growth. **R.**
3. You crown the year with your goodness. Abundance flows in your steps, in the pastures of the wilderness it flows. **R.**
4. The hills are girded with joy, the meadows covered with flocks, the valleys are decked with wheat. They shout for joy, yes, they sing. **R.**

SECOND READING Romans 8:18-23

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! The seed is the word of God, Christ the sower; whoever finds this seed will remain for ever. Alleluia!

GOSPEL Matthew 13:1-23

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for her young: by your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they who dwell in your house, for ever singing your praise.

Next Sunday's Readings:
Wisdom 12:13. 16-19
Romans 8:26-27
Matthew 13:24-43

FSC logo

www.rpbooks.co.uk rp@rpbooks.co.uk @redemptorist

SUNDAY BULLETIN



SOWERS, NOT HARVESTERS

Jesus had a core message about reconciled life lived in the presence of the merciful Abba. His summary for this was "the kingdom of God". He did not leave volumes of theology or defined doctrine. Instead he modelled a way of living towards God and others, and passed on a series of short parables that are sometimes like riddles, sometimes mini-stories, sometimes moral tales and sometimes sayings of wisdom.

Unlike the rabbis he did not make his disciples learn his words off by heart. He gave them enormous freedom to interpret them. He seems to believe that if they have opened themselves to his and the Father's Spirit they will know what to say and do. He expects them to catch his vision of God and live it out. When they don't he looks back to the great prophet Isaiah who had a similar problem and arrived at a wise diagnosis. When he passed on the word of God which could bring healing and reconciliation there were those who didn't want to hear because it would demand their conversion of mind, change – and for some that was a step too far.

When Jesus teaches his followers how to pass on his message he uses the image from everyday farming of sowing seeds. Sowing seeds, then as now, depends on so many uncontrollable elements: soil and its fertility, water and drainage, relative sunshine and shade, and so on. Every farmer knows that different parcels of land will produce different yields. Sowing is a patient process and the sower works with the results that emerge in due course.

So the model of planting the kingdom of God and its prophetic message is the model of the patient sower, not the military general planning a campaign with carefully calculated logistics, or the sales manager with target numbers and pressurised salesmen and women. Jesus planted his words and acts of mercy and kindness in land that was often unpromising but by God's grace often yielded unexpected fruit. Evangelisation today does not need models of slick presentation, calculated success, or prosperity. The Church has always been hurt when it aimed at numerical success models and full churches, calculated by census. Indeed it has hurt others when it, at times, has imposed too tightly defined a version of its faith on them. Jesus sows patiently in hope. So should we.

Catching the kingdom



David McLoughlin is a teaching theologian who has spent nearly forty years helping to train Christian teachers, ministers and activists. In this series of reflections, he considers the Sunday readings.



12 JULY 2020

15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR A

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK III