

16th Sunday Ordinary Time Dcn Joe Bush Homily Notes

Today, Jesus has an invitation for you, an invitation into his kingdom. Jesus was always talking about His Kingdom. He came precisely to establish it. He will come again at the end of time to bring His Kingdom to fulfillment. In the meantime, He taught us to pray every day for the coming of this Kingdom: "Thy Kingdom come..."

What Kingdom is Jesus talking about and why is it so important? Christ's Kingdom is life as God created it to be lived: life full of meaning, purpose, wisdom, and lasting happiness; life to the full, which we can only have through friendship with Christ, our Savior, through knowing, loving, and following Him more each day. That's the goal of Christ's Kingdom: experiencing life to the full, experiencing righteousness, peace, and joy by letting God's grace rule our thoughts and actions. His is a Kingdom that begins here on earth, in the Church, and will last through all eternity.

How do we let Christ build up his Kingdom in our lives, our family's lives, and in our communities? One necessary step is to understand God's plan, to understand what following Christ involves, what life in His Kingdom is like.

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us three key characteristics of his Kingdom.

First, the Kingdom is always growing. It started small when Christ established it - just a few disciples gathered in a room after the Resurrection. It starts small inside our souls as well. The voice of conscience, God's voice within us, is often only just a whisper, like a tiny breeze.

Christ's Kingdom starts small, like a mustard seed, like a little bit of yeast in a huge batch of flour - but it's alive, and so, it is always growing. If God's voice is only a whisper in our conscience; when we follow it, He works wonders. Christ's Kingdom is always alive, dynamic, always growing.

The second characteristic of Christ's Kingdom is that it will always have to face opposition and contradiction. The weeds and the wheat grow up together, side by side. Wherever there are saints, there are sinners to make them suffer. Wherever there are missionaries, there are always martyrs. Wherever Christ begins to change lives, scandal, mockery, persecution, and division break out like fires.

Earth is not heaven. The enemy of Christ, the devil, is hard at work here in this fallen world, resisting the advance of Christ's Kingdom. The Church itself never lacks problems and wounds caused by the sins of her ministers and the attacks of her enemies.

Even within our own hearts: evil, sinful tendencies do not disappear as our Christian identity matures. Sometimes we think that if we are following Christ everything should go smoothly. But that is not what this parable teaches us. That's not what Christ's Kingdom is like - not even for the saints. All of whom dealt with the trials of adversity or the trials of total commitment. Strangely, God sometimes allows these trials, but always in order to develop virtue, in the soul. That is the reason for trials. Accepting that our life is full of trials, is a great way to reduce spiritual stress, because it gives us realistic expectations in life.

The third characteristic of Christ's Kingdom is that its impact will always be out of proportion to its size. A little leaven makes the whole loaf rise. As if to make this point abundantly clear, Jesus specifies the amount of flour being used in the parable: three measures. That would make a

colossal amount of bread - enough to feed 100 people. And that huge lump of dough is penetrated and transformed by a pinch of yeast.

Just so, a little bit of Christian courage sends ripples far and wide. One little act of forgiveness of mercy can put an end to decades of bitterness, hatred, and resentment. One young man saying yes to God's call to the priesthood can send tidal waves of truth throughout the world. The faithful mom and dad, lawyer, carpenter, business person, the student and teacher who let Christ reign (in their hearts and actions) are spreading God's saving grace far and wide. The impact of saying yes to Christ can never be exaggerated.

Jesus Christ came to establish a Kingdom. We are members of that Kingdom, by virtue of our Baptism. And we are beneficiaries of that Kingdom, through the grace that is growing in our hearts like a mustard seed; making us, little by little, more like Christ.

Today Jesus wants us to renew our confidence in His Kingdom - its power for growth, its ability to withstand the attacks of enemies, and its capacity to transform lives, families, and communities.

All the earthly kingdoms and empires from the beginning have come and gone! But Christ's Kingdom remains, and grows, and spreads. Thy Kingdom Come

When we pray these words "Thy Kingdom Come" in the Our Father, in just a few minutes, let's mean them more than we ever have before.

And when we receive Holy Communion, let's ask Jesus to "shape our minds hearts" with his grace, so that we can say those same words throughout this coming week, not only with our mouth, but with the example of our lives: Thy Kingdom come!