

26. January 2024

## The Kingdom of God

Mk 4:26-34

*He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the crop is ready, at once he starts to reap because the harvest has come.' He also said, 'What can we say that the kingdom is like? What parable can we find for it? It is like a mustard seed which, at the time of its sowing, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth. Yet once it is sown it grows into the biggest shrub of them all and puts out big branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade.' Using many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, so far as they were capable of understanding it. He would not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything to his disciples when they were by themselves.*

How wonderful is the mystery of our baptism, in which the seed for supernatural life is sown in us! A simple and unobtrusive act, but so significant. If this seed receives the right nourishment, it will grow into a great tree in the Kingdom of God, whose fruits ripen and become food for others.

The great task for us Christians is to allow God to grow in us those graces that He wants to give us. In fact, the growth and maturation of the divine life happens in such a way that we often do not even notice it, because the Kingdom of God does not come with loud noise and great outward signs.

Rather, His Kingdom unfolds in us to the extent that our whole human life is transformed by the Spirit of God. Virtues grow, disordered passions are restrained, our thinking is shaped by truth, our acting - following the promptings of the Holy Spirit - becomes more and more God's acting in us, with which we willingly cooperate with the freedom we have been given. The often self-centred interests of our own 'I' become, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a genuine concern to seek first the Kingdom of God (cf. Mt 6:33) and to learn to meet our neighbour in God's love.

The Kingdom of God, whose coming we pray for every day in the Lord's Prayer, must first take shape within us. As far as our own sanctification is concerned, we can actively co-operate; as far as other people are concerned, we can only offer them help and invite them by our example to take the path of holiness.

But when we think and act in the Holy Spirit, we are already contributing to the expansion of the Kingdom of God, because, although His Kingdom is not of this world, as Jesus said to Pilate (cf. Jn 18:36), it is to work in this world darkened by fallen humanity. The disciples are to be salt for the earth and light for the world (cf. Mt 5:13-15)! In this sense, the Kingdom of God does not remain only a transcendent and interior reality; it wants to take visible form in this world.

This is also one of the fundamental reasons why faith cannot be allowed to be relegated to the private sphere: God's reign is a real reign, even and precisely if it is not imposed by earthly means! Here again lies the great responsibility that we Christians have, not only with regard to our personal lives and our family environment, but also because we are always Catholics. This means that the seriousness of our following of Christ has a universal character in God's hands, and we are always called to collaborate so that His Kingdom can grow.

Undoubtedly, it is God Himself who provides the nourishment for the seed of His Kingdom to grow, and it is His Wisdom that drives everything. But He, in His goodness, has wanted to integrate us into His plan of salvation, not as puppets or marionettes that can be pulled by strings, but as His beloved children and collaborators in His Kingdom.