

## GROWING SEASON

Spring is here; the threat of frost has passed. Many of us turn our attention to our gardens. I am not a good gardener. The gift of gardening was delivered to my wife; she has the patience to tend to her plants and the attentiveness to note when a leaf looks a little chewed or a stem begins to droop.

Today's readings are about small things that the Lord takes and grows. Ezekiel describes how God will "tear off a tender shoot" from a cedar, plant it, and watch it grow into its own majestic cedar. Jesus compares the kingdom of God to "a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants."



Jesus also tells a parable of scattered seed that grows and bears fruit until finally harvested. (We can presume that the sower scattered wisely, chose good soil, then watered, fertilized and pruned between sowing and harvesting.)

God alone grows the seeds into fruitful crops and mighty trees, not us. Although we can't see this, we believe this because, as St. Paul writes, "we walk by faith, not by sight." We disciples, gardeners for Christ, affect this growth by our patience, our attentiveness, and our efforts. In the end, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense, according to what he did..." Did you water and prune; did you weed and fertilize; provide cover? What can you do?

The garden is a metaphor for the community we live in. Our efforts are like seeds: trying to start something, we scatter and sow. Rather, some of us scatter. Others water. Still others weed. God gives us the responsibilities we can handle, but participate we must because it is *our* garden, our community garden, that we want to see grow and bear fruit.

In the garden, our lives are lived with others; therefore, as the U.S. Bishops wrote, "our human rights are realized in community, and we all must work together, across generational and economic lines, for the sake of the common good, for the general welfare of the entire human family."

None of us is going to save the entire human family – that was taken care of 2000 years ago – but any one of us can begin working in a community as a community to ensure that human rights flourish.

Your efforts matters! You matter! Justice requires system change and you can sow the seeds of change of hundreds of years of systemic injustice by nibbling around the edges. This may sound insignificant but it matters! At last year's Catholic Campaign for Human Development Banquet, Bishop Peter Smith, quoting St. Teresa of Calcutta, said: "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop." Therefore, be that one drop and focus on changing the systems and structures that create and perpetuate injustice. Keep at it. Be kind but keep at it. Listen to God's people. Be attentive to God's people. Be attentive to your garden.

In the end, our small efforts will grow, for the LORD lifts high the lowly tree and makes the withered tree bloom (cf. Ezekiel).

(Readings for the Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time)