

FROM FR. CHRIS ALIMAJI'S DESK

Reflections on the Kingdom Parables (1)

On this Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, we read from Ezekiel 17:22-24; 2 Corinthians 5:6-10; Mark 4:26-34; and our Song of Praise is Psalm 92. We are now through with the numerous solemnities following the Resurrection of the Lord from the dead into life everlasting. Isn't it great that our attention at this stage is directed towards the kingdom of God? We know that parables are wise sayings with a lesson at the conclusion. Always watch out for the lesson for it is more important than the story. Three points I am pondering on are: (1) Work on our environment as God does. (2) Our limitedness must compel us to trust in God, and (3) The planted seed passes through many hands to feed many, just as it must take many hands to build the kingdom of God for the benefit of the many.

Think of a moment in your Christian activities when you helped to plant the kingdom of God. What did it take to do that? Certainly, it took inspiration, interest, willingness, self-assurance, a yes to God, time, planning, getting together with other people of like minds and vision with you, using your talents and spiritual gifts, sacrifices, dedication, perseverance, prayer, re-assurance that you were on the right track, etc. **How is that kingdom-project today? What kind of nourishing environment did you provide for the kingdom to blossom? How is it affecting your family, your whole household, your siblings, friends, neighbors, and your very personal life?** May be, I should add, is your life's pattern providing or being nourished by a Christian environment? And how is your family responding to it, that is, are they following in your footsteps? I am inclined to ask many questions here. And does your family find pleasure in worshipping God with you, OR are they doing it just for the time being to please you? That is how to assess it. If, on the other hand, you have not started to plant the kingdom of God, the above are areas to reflect upon. As the prophet Ezekiel said, God himself plans to plant seed on a high and lofty mountain. It will bear fruits and become a majestic cedar, serving several purposes, (cf. Ezek. 17:22-23). Do you know that cedars live for hundreds of years?

St. Paul in this letter to the Corinthians today reminded us that "we walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor. 5:7). People often love this passage when we read it at funerals in the Resolutions. But what does it really mean? What are you doing for God that heaven should reward you for? What is your assurance of faith that makes you feel secure that you will go to heaven should you pass away today, right now? Or how much time do you need from God? **This concerns the last judgment by God, not about our feelings. As a result, we must do our best to please God in readiness for the judgment day, when Christ will reward us based on what we did in the body whether good or evil. So, what we do in this life in faith will really matter.**

The Lord gave us two parables of the kingdom in today's gospel regarding the grain of seed that is scattered in the field and the mustard seed that is sown in fertile ground. The importance of fertile ground and nourishment of the faith that is received, cannot be over-emphasized. Where do we find what Jesus explained to his disciples in private that are not written in the Bible, (cf. Mk. 4:34)? The Bible has lots of his teachings. Unfortunately, some of us have not started Bible studies yet. You wonder how they get to nourish their Christian faith. In that case, we have double study to make, the study of the Bible and of the Books of Tradition (Church History), if you really want to be fully acquainted with the spread of the Faith. Reflecting on parables and growth of the kingdom, one needs to read the writings of the early Fathers of

the Church. Some are in the Divine Office, and some are elsewhere. I read a book titled: The Greatest Faith Ever Known. It depicted a continuation of Acts of the Apostles. It contained how St. Peter and St. Paul were arrested, leading to their last days and death. **I know that the missionary works of some of the Apostles were not written in the Bible (Acts of the Apostles). Some were never heard of again after the Pentecost. What about their labors for the planting of the Faith? This is where Church History and Tradition have great roles that form part of the early Church and how evangelization cannot exclude what brought us to where we are today.** Planting the Christian Faith in anyone's life is important. That is how the kingdom of God begins. How do you water it? We learn from missionary reports around the world in spreading the Faith. Get involved in some concrete manners. Become an ambassador for Christ and spread the good news for the spread of the kingdom of God. Join to evangelize!