

We're all aware that children grow up faster than we might think. There is a period of slightly increased growth rate between the ages of six and eight. While all children may grow at a different rate, they seem, according to a study, to grow fastest in the summer months.

Last Friday, I was extremely delighted and immeasurably encouraged to see two children of our Faith Formation attending the 7 o'clock morning Mass. Since the locked down order in March and opening up in late May, many families "view" church from home and hardly do we see the regular Mass goers, let alone the young.

When they came up for holy communion, I realized how much I have missed seeing our Faith Formation families and how much their children have grown over last few months. To live is to grow. That's true.

Our Scripture for this Fifteenth Sunday in the midst of summer is about growth. So it's a good time to think about growth. In the midst of COVID-19 and increasing number of confirmed cases in many places, we are called upon to reflect on the reality that God's purpose and plan is that we grow.

In the first reading from Isaiah, we are told that just as the rain pours down upon the earth making it fertile and fruitful, so too the Word of God pours down upon us until it takes root in us and produces good fruit. Our challenge is to produce good soil so that the seed of the Word of God can be planted in us.

And from the Gospel of St. Matthew, we hear the familiar parable of growth. "A sower went out to sow. Some seed fell on the path where birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up but withered from lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns and the thorns choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirty fold."

The basic message in this Parable of the Sower is that growth will happen and that God's plan and God's will is that we cooperate in the growing. We see people every day whose lives are burdened by the COVID-19, disease infection, weariness and isolation, and we are called upon to have a faith in a God who is present and whose life grows in our midst.

We see the record surge in new coronavirus cases in many places, including our islands, and the evidences of the pandemic's long-term effects on the world, and we are called upon to trust that God's Word and Way will prevail.

We see in our own lives, in our families, in our neighborhoods, discouragement and frustration because things don't seem to be progressing and growing, and we are called upon to believe that the God who started all good things will bring forth a harvest of love, of care and compassion for our families and world.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

Growing in faith is very much about allowing God's Word to take root in us and flourish, bloom into a fullness of life that only God can provide. Let us strive, in the midst of uncertainties and hardship and even fear to see the goodness and greatness of our God. But our growing in faith does not stop there.

You see, being "good soil" is more than simply being on the receiving end of God's goodness and benevolence. No, the deepest and most profound and most authentic kind of growth is embodied in the one who is able to not only receive from God, but give in return - encourage one another and pass along or pay forward if you prefer, every good thing we receive.

Indeed, it is in our relationships with one another and those beyond our Ohana of Sts. Peter and Paul – in the support and nurture of the faith that we give to one another that we find growth.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY A

Is 55:10-11; Rm 8:18-23; Mt 13:1-23

May the Word of God take deeper roots in our lives and our compassion, kind care and love for one another may forever grow.

Amen