

**PARISH OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL AND ST SIMON STOCK
CARMELITE CHURCH 41 KENSINGTON CHURCH STREET LONDON W8 4BB**

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Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (B) – 13th June 2021

The idea of a kingdom is certainly familiar to us who live in this part of the world with a history of kings. Biblical Israel also had a history of kings, the greatest of them being probably king David. Yet we know from the book of Samuel (1 Sam:8-15) that Israel's demand for a king was a slight on God who was committed to leading Israel as their king. Israel was not satisfied with the rule of God because they envied the 'other nations' who had human kings and appeared successful at war.

Just as ancient Israel rejected the rule of God, the people in the time of Jesus also rejected the kingdom of God that Jesus was bringing about. It seemed to have been overthrown when Jesus was crucified. But not exactly. The kingdom of God had been established in and among Jesus's disciples. And although it seemed infinitesimal at the time, it was real and sprouting.

Speaking to the crowds, Jesus describes the nature of the kingdom of God emphasizing how the kingdom grows and who is responsible for its growth. He compares the kingdom of God to a seed growing by itself while the sower is asleep. We know that anyone who plants a seed keeps an eye on it and nurtures it. He does not simply go off to sleep and allow the seed to take care of itself. So why does Jesus use this imagery? He uses it to underline that the growth of the kingdom is entirely the work of God. Once the seed (of faith in Jesus) is sown the kingdom grows anyway, because God is responsible for the growth of the kingdom. The sheer smallness of the seed (mustard seed) in relation to the big shrub that it eventually turns into depicts the gradual evolving of the kingdom of God. It is therefore not something that is sudden, magical or dramatic in its growth. It produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. It is a gradual process.

Listening to this teaching of Jesus, it is possible to imagine what was its background. We are not given that insight explicitly in the passage. It would appear that the crowds had been expecting that the kingdom of God would be established at once and expected it to overthrow the existing order in Israel. So Jesus taught them that the kingdom of God is not a sudden takeover. It is first of all the work of God which unfolds gradually and in stages according to God's plan. Yet when it is fully manifest, it will indeed take over the world and everyone will take shelter in it. The idea that this kingdom is a place of unity and peace is depicted by the imagery in our first reading: that every kind of bird will live beneath it and every winged creature rest in the shade of its branches.

We may now ask, how does this depiction of God's kingdom relate to us? First of all, this kingdom of God is Jesus himself. We can recognize two levels of God's reign in our lives: within the Christian community and in individual lives. Our spiritual growth, the reign of God in our lives, is the work of the Holy Spirit of God within us. God carries out this work in us night and day while we are asleep insofar as that small seed of faith has been planted within us. Something we can learn from Jesus's parable is that this work of God in us is not always as apparent as we might expect. But like a seed it gradually sprouts and grows.

This obviously calls for our patience to allow God to do this work which only He does. Of course, Jesus is not saying that we don't have to do anything; we must in fact co-operate with God in His work by allowing Him, that is, removing the obstacles in our lives that might impede his work. It also calls for our trust in God that he is carrying out His work in us at the pace that He wants, even if it does not seem obvious. As St Paul says in our second reading, we must go by faith and not merely by sight. However, the parable also gives a way of knowing that growth has actually taken place: it's when 'every kind of bird can shelter in the shade provided by the tree. In other words, we know that faith has grown in us when we become a source of shelter and solace for anyone searching for rest; when we accommodate and make for unity among all people.

NOTICES

Confirmation Mass

Next Sunday, 20th June, Bishop Sherrington will be here in our parish to celebrate the 12.15pm Mass during which he will administer the sacrament of Confirmation to our young candidates who have been preparing for this sacrament over the past months.

Church Opening

From this week our church will be open from 7.30am to 7.00pm. All COVID protocols will continue to be observed including signing in using Track & Trace number or NHS App. Please continue to sanitize your hands, wear your face mask and maintain a safe distance while in the church.

Preparations for First Holy Communion

We are now accepting registrations for preparations for Holy Communion. The last group met by Zoom only. But this group which will commence classes in September will meet face to face here in our church hall. All necessary protocols for safety at that time will of course be followed. If you have children for First Holy Communion, please do register them ahead of September. Children must be 7yrs old by 31st August. The registration form is on our website www.carmelitechurch.org/activities/catechism-classes or simply email and request a form to be sent to you.

Family Retreat Day

A day of retreat is being organised for families at the SPEC Centre, Pinner HA5 3EP on Sunday 27th June from 9am-5pm. It is organised for families by families. Children of all ages are welcome. The retreat is structured around times of teaching and personal prayer for parents. Fr Matt Blake, Carmelite, will help the parents (re)discover the power of prayer. Children participate in a school of prayer specially tailored to their age, under the responsibility of volunteers. If you would like to register or just know a little bit more, please visit our website: <https://www.pulse-retreats.com/catholic-family-retreat> Do not hesitate to share the information and invite friends who might be interested.

Collections Last Sunday

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| Offering | £1427 |
| Gift Aid Envelopes | £168 |

Thank you for your generosity

Fr. Thaddeus, OCD