

HOMILY FOR THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR B



In the B readings for the eleventh Sunday of Ordinary time Jesus uses the image of the kingdom of God as likened to the sowing of seeds. The first reading from Ezekiel also uses the analogy of God planting a tender shoot that shall “put forth branches and bear fruit”. Finally in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians he directs us to be courageous because all that we do in our bodies while in the world will eventually be accounted for.

This is also Father’s Day weekend and the readings remind us that our Father in heaven is the planter and sower of seeds. In some imitative way all fathers on Earth are called to be an image of the sower of seeds and it will take great courage to be thus. Pride in the ‘historic man’ often leads to a desire to

dominate and grasp which are not the values imaged by Jesus in using these parables of sowing seeds. Genesis tells us of the fallen relationship of Adam and Eve (referring first to Eve), “Your desire shall be for your husband, but he will dominate you” (Genesis 3:16). Of course domination is not exclusive to men and not exclusive to only the relationship of spouses. All of us have a tendency to not be patient but to dominate others in an attempt to obtain what our hearts desire.

We live in a world of instant gratification or you might say constant gratification. The image of sowing seeds and waiting for the fruit of ones efforts is becoming more and more foreign to all people. We want to harvest immediately with the least amount of effort and then claim the accomplishment that our pride thirsts for. Regarding men specifically, sowing and waiting is often thought insignificant and non-glorious and can even appear counter to the drive inherent in their makeup. St. John Paul teaches us that, because the man was the one who was first to dominate, it is therefore his first to learn to un-dominate (TOB 33:2).

Yet, our Father in heaven is exceptionally driven in his desire that all of us turn to him and find rest. Christ and all of the Scriptures have taught us this but the Son also taught us that God does not will to dominate us and force us to turn to him. Instead, he plants seeds that grow and provide an ever new means of building trust in him and in what he promises. And his promise to us is simple: his love. However, because of the fall and the entrance of dominance and grasping in the world, a shadow has been cast upon all fatherhood that then gets assumed to be true of the Father’s relationship to us. Of course, this lie was not meant to be. “By casting doubt in this heart on the deepest meaning of the gift, that is, on love as the specific motive of creation and of the original covenant (see Gen 3:5), man turns his back on God-Love, on the ‘Father’” (TOB 26:4).

Fathers are in a place that is unique and powerful and yet that power is in the love that they humbly can initiate rather than in any dominance that they may claim. St. John Paul tells us, “With shame, the human being manifests ‘instinctively,’ as it were, the need for the affirmation and acceptance of this ‘I’ according to its proper value” (TOB 12:1). He means this in the sense, of course, of husband and wife and their personal value being recognized by each other but this is just as important regarding the personal value of all in relation to the self. This is where the seeds of new fruit-bearing life are sown. A father’s affirmation of his bride and of his children is the most important gift that he has to give. That affirmation of their value is in effect the greatest of all acts of love and is shown, indeed, as an act of love.

With the subject (person) receiving this affirmation of their value in whatever form that affirmation may take they are set free to grow and to bear fruit that will last rather than to counter with a grasping at affirmation. This free affirmation is often offered in small and seemingly insignificant ways and yet, like a man who scatters seeds in abundance, fathers too can be assured that their efforts to love by affirming the value of their family will bring forth the desired effect which is an affirmation of his own value.



Ordained in 2007, Fr. John Linden enjoyed three years as a parochial vicar at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Ann Arbor before becoming the Chair of the Formation Department for the Diocese of Lansing, as well as the Director of Seminarians. Fr. John travels throughout the diocese giving presentations on topics including vocations and vocational discernment as well as Theology of the Body and its connection to both marriage and consecrated life.