



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

11<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year B-June 13<sup>th</sup> 2021

***Readings: Ezekiel 17: 22-24, Psalm 91, 2 Corinthians: 5: 6-10,***

***Mark 4: 26-34***

I don't know if Jesus was a gardener in his spare time. I do know that He was once, memorably, mistaken for one. Certainly He employed a lot of horticultural and agricultural imagery in His teaching. Today is no exception.

It has been a bad start to the year for us gardeners. A ridiculously dry April followed by a sodden and cold and thoroughly inhospitable May. The fig has been reluctant to leaf. The clematis are late and some have wilted. Tomatoes are way behind. It is too early to put things out and the seed trays have stayed unruffled by emerging life as the pattern of germination has been greatly delayed by the unseasonal cold – which I can only attribute to global warming.

Those of you watch and follow St. Monty of the Don will also realise how much fashion in gardening is changing. Rigid manicured borders and strictly regimented spaces have given way to a 'return to nature' look. Corporation planting gives way to meadowland and the recolonization of wildlife. While 'smart' is overtaken by 'scruffy' , both require intelligent management so that the former does not erase the quirks of natural beauty and the latter does not simply revert to a riot of weeds and unwanted mattresses.

In today's Gospel Jesus speaks simply of the faithfully planted seed. The gardener/farmer does not know the mystery of the process, he simply plants in faith. Whether he is asleep or awake the process of what he has planted begins, for some time unseen.

The seed must be buried. The secret code, locked in this tiny apparently lifeless piece of dust, must be embedded and await the right season and the watering to break open and begin the journey – first in putting down a root that will sustain the future and then surging ever upwards towards the light. These are powerful metaphors for the spiritual life.

Each little miniscule package of life contains its own unique code. For the uninitiated it would be impossible to tell a broad bean from an oak tree, a passiflora from a pachysandra. But a gardener knows. He is familiar with the disciplines of cultivation. A king Edward potato is not as beautiful as Zephirine Drouhin rose but while one feeds the body the other feeds the soul. They both have their place in the garden of the church.

A good gardener knows his plants and his crops.

We are all in the business of the gardening of paradise. Planting the seed in faith. Enabling the right conditions. We are Cultivators.

The origin of the word 'cultivated' is not a prissy definition of socially refined manners. It comes from a Latin root meaning the dwelling in and care of the land, an occupier and friend of the earth, a tender of and carer for creation. It even has the subsidiary and not unrelated meaning of 'a worshipper of God'.

Jesus takes our role as Man, given care and dominion of this earth on behalf of God, and applies it to both our physical and spiritual life – the two are natural companions.

We are preparers of the soil. Planters in faith. Nurturers of the new growth. Feeders of the crop. Cultivators of our land and of the souls of our people in the flowering of faith and in the fruits of virtue. Each seedling a precious gift, a triumph of life, a testament to the gracious bounty of God.

