

Homily Outline for the Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
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- I. In 1935, C. H. Dodd, a highly respected British New Testament scholar, published *The Parables of the Kingdom*. In that book, Dodd focuses on Jesus’ “seed parables” to describe the amazing growth of the kingdom of God” (pp 140–56). Two of those seed parables comprise today’s Gospel (Mark 4:26–34).
 - A. In the first parable, Jesus makes a clear connection between the mystery of how seeds grow and the mysterious growth of the kingdom of God. Seeds and the kingdom of God begin very small but grow substantially into something much bigger.
 1. Part of this process is the fact that growth indeed happens although no one knows exactly how the seed grows beyond the built-in process of blade, ear, and full grain.
 2. Perhaps Jesus told this parable to encourage his followers in the face of disappointment, suffering, and persecution.
 3. They feel tiny, overwhelmed, and helpless in the present moment. However, this smallness will eventually and mysteriously be transformed into something big and powerful, namely, the kingdom of God.
 - B. The second seed parable compares the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed. At first it seems to stress the same dynamic. Something very small grows into something very large. The comparison, however, does not quite fit. A mustard seed grows into a shrub – not the largest of plants.
 1. Why would Jesus use something as unimpressive as a mustard seed becoming a shrub to exemplify the kingdom of God? Perhaps he wants to emphasize that the kingdom of God is not at all like other kingdoms with all their grandiosity.

2. The kingdom of God, like a mustard shrub, is ordinary. The reality of God's kingdom can be found in the ordinary things of everyday life, like mustard seeds and shrubs. We are surrounded daily by ordinary things. Jesus encourages us to see the extraordinary in the ordinary.
- II. Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of *Opus Dei*, whose feast day is later this month, on June 26th, emphasized that God is to be found in the everyday circumstances of ordinary life, even in the sanctification of our work.
- A. Another important theme of Saint Josemaría that flows from the idea that God is to be found in the everyday circumstances of ordinary life is the concept of divine filiation.
1. The word "filiation" comes from Latin: the word *filius* means "son"; the word *filia* means "daughter." Divine filiation is the truth that we are sons and daughters of God by virtue of our baptism.
 2. "After creating us, God has wished freely to give us the greatest dignity – that of being his children and achieving the happiness proper to . . . the members of his own family."¹
 3. In the First Letter of Saint John, he writes, "See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God" (1 John 3:1).
 4. Saint Peter wrote in his second letter that God "has bestowed on us precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).
- B. There are many wonderful consequences for us that flow from being sons and daughters of God.
1. "He who knows himself [or herself] to be a son [or daughter] of God knows no fear. God knows best what our real needs are; He is stronger than we are, and He is our Father. We must react like the child who, in the middle of a storm, continued playing while the sailors feared for their lives: he was the captain's son. When after disembarking the child was asked how he was able to remain at ease, surrounded as he had been by a roaring sea and a terrified crew, he answered, *Fear? Why? My father was at the helm.* When we try to identify our will with the will of God, it is He who steers us with an expert hand towards a safe harbor."²

C. Divine filiation gives us great confidence in God.

1. "Divine filiation is the foundation for the freedom, security and happiness of the children of God. In it man finds the protection he needs and that fatherly warmth and certainty in the future which enables him to abandon himself without worrying about the unknown things that tomorrow may bring."³
2. "The realization that one is a son [or daughter] of God produces in all the circumstances of the Christian's life an essentially loving approach to the world, which shows itself mainly in the virtue of faith."⁴ Those who know themselves to be a son or daughter of God have an abiding happiness and inner joy, and they never lose their peace of mind.

D. Another consequence of divine filiation is that, since God is our Father, then Jesus is our Brother, Mary is our mother, and we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.⁵

III. The reason I am talking about divine filiation today is because today is Father's Day, and as we honor our biological fathers today, we also give honor and praise to God our Father.

A. After Pope St. John Paul II wrote his first encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, about Jesus, he wrote his second encyclical letter, *Dives in Misericordia*, on God the Father. It starts with this first paragraph:

- B. "It is 'God, who is rich in mercy' whom Jesus Christ has revealed to us as Father: it is His very Son who, in Himself, has manifested Him and made Him known to us. Memorable in this regard is the moment when Philip, one of the twelve Apostles, turned to Christ and said: 'Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied'; and Jesus replied: 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me...? He who has seen me has seen the Father.' . . . [Our] lofty calling [is] revealed in Christ through the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love."⁶

IV. In our responsorial psalm today (Ps. 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16), we proclaimed, "Lord, it is good to give thanks to you."

A. In our Eucharist on this Father's Day, in addition to being thankful for our biological fathers, we give thanks to God for being Our Father, for adopting us into His family through baptism, and for giving us the gift of His Son, who comes to us now in this Eucharist.

V. May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God*, vol. 4 (London: Scepter Press, 2012), p. 605.

² Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God*, vol. 4, p. 607.

³ Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God*, vol. 1 (London: Scepter Press, 2012), p. 249.

⁴ Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God*, vol. 1, p. 250.

⁵ See Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, n. 139

⁶ Pope St. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Dives in Misericordia* (1980), n. 1.