

**HOMILY ~ 11th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
JUNE 12/13, 2021**

*When the night has been too lonely
And the road has been too long
And you think that love is only
For the lucky and the strong
Just remember in the winter
Far beneath the bitter snows
Lies the seed that with the sun's love
In the spring becomes the rose*

I think this song describes the past year pretty well. I know I have had a lot of lonely nights. I have not slept very well, and I am still having COVID dreams. I don't know if any of you are having them; but they seem so real while I am dreaming, and upsetting, and I realize they are just bizarre when I wake up. But by then, I am awake and lonely. And this road has been too long. For those of you who have been working from home, when your employer first told you to stay home, did you ever think you would be doing it for a year and a half? And all of this isolation. We certainly have not been giving and receiving love the way we were used to giving and receiving. But we are coming out of the pandemic, and those roses are beginning to sprout. I have been asking myself: "Where has God been in all of this?"

I think I got a partial answer in the parable from the Gospel reading for today. Parables are fictional stories from everyday life that compare two things, an analogy. Jesus compares the reign of God to the growing of seeds. We can sow the seeds and nurture them, but it is God that does all of the growing. We really do not know how he does this, it just happens. We cannot do it without the seed that God provides. We cannot create the seed, and we cannot give it life. We can see the results of God's work, but how God

does it is a mystery. I think God has been doing his work in our lives in ways that we do not know, but we can see the results. I have been walking outside almost every day. I have observed what happened each spring. The grass turned green; the trees flowered and developed leaves; the bulbs sprouted and the roses bloomed; the birds, squirrels and chipmunks carried on as if nothing was happening. In fact, if I did not see another person with a mask, I would think there was no pandemic. God sustained our environment. And God inspired scientists to develop a safe and effective vaccine in record breaking time. God inspired our health care professionals who took care of us day after day. God inspired our first responders, our gas station attendants, our trash collectors, our grocery store workers, our delivery people and many others to keep putting themselves at risk to provide everything we needed. God brought issues like racism and discrimination to our attention so that we can begin to deal with them. These things are all good, and that is where we can find God. I am not sure how God did this, but I do not think we would have been able to do it without him. People sometimes say: "I keep praying and nothing happens." I think something is always happening; we are frequently just not aware of what it is.

We learned from the second parable that big things can grow from the tiniest of mustard seeds. We plant the seeds and nurture them and God does his part. Small actions can lead to major accomplishments. During the pandemic, I have been focusing upon the little things that God was calling me to do each day and making the decisions I need to make now and then leaving the big picture to God. Trying to predict the future

was just making me crazy. As we move forward, think of the little things you can do each day to help yourself and others move forward. Think of the people you know who had major losses during the pandemic, the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, the loss of a business, the loss of a marriage. A word of encouragement, a card, a phone call can make a difference. Think of someone who is still at home afraid to go out. Think of something they may feel comfortable doing and do it with them. That will help. Give someone a hug. Shake someone's hand. Reach out to someone and tell them that you love and miss them. We do our part and God does his. As we heard in the Second Reading: "We walk by faith, not by sight." Know that God is always working in our lives, and exactly what he is doing is sometimes a mystery to us. But the roses will come.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim