

11th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

St. Mark 4:26-34

The mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds. It is barely the size of a grain of sand but it produces a tree which can grow to the height of an oak tree. The mustard seed also has unique properties. Unlike other seeds the mustard seed cannot be crossed with any other seed. It refuses all attempts at cross-germination, and unlike other seeds it also thrives in places where there are little nutrients and high levels of pollution.

The work of grace in our lives is like a mustard seed. We receive grace in Baptism which washes away original sin but we continue to sin. We receive the grace of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation but we continue to act anyway we like. We receive the grace of the absolution of our sins in Penance but we continue to commit the same sins. The problem is, firstly, we do not cooperate with the grace given to us in the Sacraments. Grace is freely given but it must be freely used. The other problem is that we do not recognise the workings of grace in our lives. Those who genuinely confess their sins can become discouraged when they commit the same sins over and over again. But this discouragement is the work of the devil who tries to deceive us and make us think that God's grace is not enough or that we are not worthy of His grace. But the fact is that the grace of God is like a seed. If you were to plant a seed in the ground today and a full grown tree would be there tomorrow then you can be sure that the tree itself would likely topple over in the first storm. That's because it never had the chance to produce any roots, to establish any foundation for itself on which it could build itself up. And so it takes time, months even, before we see anything sprouting above ground from that seed. It's the same with grace. Just because we don't see the workings of grace straight away it does not mean that there is no grace at all. Instead, that grace of God needs take hold in

us, to produce roots and to establish a foundation. Only then can it grow and produce fruit in us. So we need to be patient, and we need to co-operate with the grace offered to us. Only then will that grace take hold in us and make us become who we were created to be.