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## Great Oaks from Little Acorns Spring

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By Rev. Msgr. Kevin T. Hart

"Great oaks from little acorns spring," as the saying goes. This aphorism sums up today's Gospel (Mark 4:26-34) on Jesus' parable of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not another term for heaven, but for the reign of God, when all the world will accept the will of God, and when God's will is done as perfectly on earth as it is in heaven. This is the aim and goal of God for the entire universe.

Although the parable is short, it contains three important truths. First, it tells of the utter helplessness of man. The farmer does not make the seed grow; he does not even understand how it grows. It has the secret of life and of growth within itself. We can never really create anything in the full and literal sense of the term. We can discover things; we can rearrange them; we can develop them, but to create them we cannot. We do not create the Kingdom of God, for the Kingdom is God's. It is true that we can frustrate and hinder it. We can also make a situation in our immediate world where it is given an opportunity to come more fully and more speedily.

Second, in comparing the growth and development of the Kingdom to nature, Jesus reminds us that the growth of the kingdom, like the growth in nature, is often imperceptible. We cannot see a plant growing. It is only if we look at it after some interval of time that we notice the growth. If we look at it every day we cannot see the growth taking place. It is only if we go away and then come back after an interval of time that we can see the difference. So it is with the Kingdom. We may not notice a change in the Kingdom of God in our immediate world, but if we, say, go on a retreat and think back over the past year of our lives, than we can notice a difference.

Although the growth of the Kingdom may be imperceptible, it is nevertheless, as in nature, constant. Night and day, while we sleep, growth goes on. The trouble with our growing the Kingdom is that we are sometimes spasmodic: one day we take a step forward, the next day we take two steps back. But the work of God goes on quietly and God unceasingly unfolds his plan.

Nature's growth is inevitable. There is nothing as powerful as growth. A tree can split a concrete pavement. A weed can push its green head through an asphalt path. Nothing can stop growth. So it is with the Kingdom: in spite of our rebelliousness and disobedience, God's work goes on. In the end, nothing can stop the purposes of God.

Third, Jesus reminds us that while God creates the Kingdom, we do have a role to play in developing it, a double role. First, if the Kingdom of God is people, then we are the seeds that He has sown. Quietly, patiently, imperceptibly, constantly and inevitably God unfolds within us the growth of His Kingdom. We need to mirror God's patience, our patience with Him as well as with ourselves. We cannot let our human weaknesses get us down. He gives us His own Son in the Eucharist, and He is quick to forgive our failures to grow into the Kingdom of God. With that patience, with the Eucharist, with His forgiveness comes hope, the hope that God is so much more powerful than we are, and that He will bring to fulfillment the good work He has begun in us.

Fourth, we are also the sower. Our striving to live our true selves has an effect on others. Our good example, our ability to cope with disappointments, our fervent reception of the Eucharist and our constant turning to Jesus for forgiveness can open the hearts of our family, neighbors and co-workers so that the Lord can bring them along with us on that journey to the Kingdom. Our faith may be as small as a mustard seed, but just such seeds can hasten the inevitable flourishing of the Kingdom.

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