

### **Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

One of the first games that I can remember playing as a child was the game of hide and seek. While one child covered their eyes and counted up to 100 the rest of us would go and find a place to hide. Although I thought that I was pretty good at hiding I was usually one of the first ones found. I think this is a game that God likes to play with us. God seems to play it with me when I go bird watching. It often takes me a long time to find a bird that I can hear somewhere in the trees around me. God plays it with everybody who plants seed in a garden. Once the seed goes into the soil it remains hidden there changing and growing until the shoot breaks through the top of the soil.

Jesus uses two parables today to speak to us about the kingdom that he had come to establish on earth, the Kingdom of God. These stories help us to understand something important about the way that God works. Any of us who has a garden can stand in amazement as we watch the ways that plants grow. Jesus reminds us that when a person plants seed in the ground, “Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.” We can only say that God is at work there in the garden in a hidden and wonderful way.

But God doesn't just work in gardens. God is at work in so many different ways and often it is hidden and out of sight. I think we can reflect upon that in a special way today as we join in celebration with those families whose children are making their First Holy Communion.

Children I would like to talk with you about some of the hidden ways that God has been at work in your families. God was there when your parents fell in love with each other. God was there when you were conceived in your mother's womb. God was there in a very special way when you were born. Your parents received you as a beautiful gift that had been given to them by God. They wanted to thank God for that gift you are. And they wanted to share with you a gift that they had been given: their relationship with the God who loves them, and with them created you. When you were quite small they brought you to the church to be baptised. They wanted you to belong to a community that believes in God, a community that would help them to show the face of God to you. They wanted you to belong to a Church that would help them to be good parents, clear signs of God's love for you.

In some ways that was only the beginning. Since then God has been very busy in your family playing hide and seek. You were growing in many ways like the seed in today's gospel. In a very beautiful way you were

growing in love. Over the last twelve months some of the hidden ways that God has been at work have been made clearer. You have been sitting with your parents as they have prepared you to celebrate the sacraments. They prepared you first to celebrate God's forgiveness in Reconciliation. They helped you to see that God was there every time you forgave your brother or sister. And since the beginning of this year they have prepared you for the sacrament of Confirmation and now for your First Holy Communion. On Friday night Fr. Philip Marshall prayed that God would send his Holy Spirit to you in a new way, so that you would be filled with all the gifts you need to be a loving disciple of Jesus.

Today Jesus wants to come to you in Holy Communion. He wants you to know how much he loves you, how much he cares about you every day. In some ways we could say that Jesus is like the mustard bush that he speaks about in today's gospel. The mustard tree is not very big, but it puts out branches so that the birds can shelter in its shade. Jesus puts his arms out to us so that we can shelter under his protection and care.

Jesus comes to you in Holy Communion today as a companion and a friend. He wants you to come to know him as someone who is always with you, someone with whom you can speak at any time about anything. The way that he comes to you today is a sign of the way that

he is always there for you. Jesus comes to you under the signs of food and drink. We cannot live without food. We need to drink often. We cannot live without Jesus. We need to drink deep from the life that he offers us.

Jesus is hidden under the signs of bread and wine. We cannot see Jesus, but we believe that He is there for us, truly present to us in the consecrated bread and wine. When we go back home we cannot see Jesus there either, but he goes home with us. We meet him there in everyone who loves us. He reaches out to us in every act of kindness that is shown to us. And we make Him present too, by every good thing that we do for others.

We believe that we become more and more like Jesus when we receive Him in Holy Communion. That is why so many of us come to Mass as often as we can. We know that we need to be fed by Jesus if we are to do his work well.

Children I would like you to think about how Jesus has been at work in you as He has prepared you for your First Holy Communion. You are like God's plants that have been growing in ways that are hidden. Today you can thank God for all the people who have helped you to grow enough to be ready to welcome Jesus into your hearts in Holy Communion.