

Reflecting  
**on the 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time**



Archdiocese of  
**Liverpool**

## Prepare to be attentive to *The God Who Speaks in this story.*



- Light a candle or tea light if possible.
- Perhaps place a flower from the garden or a plant next to the light.

## Let us begin our time of prayer for the Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

## Let the music help you to relax. Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your mind as you open to the Word.



O, Lord hear my prayer

O, Lord hear my prayer

When I call, answer me

O, Lord hear my prayer

O, Lord hear my prayer

Come and listen to me



## Spend some time just looking at the three images.

- Where is your eye drawn to?
- What feelings are you experiencing?
- What are you noticing?



## Pray the Responsorial Psalm for today.



*O Lord, you are good and forgiving.*

You forgive all who call on your name.  
Lord, listen to my prayer!

*O Lord, you are good and forgiving.*

All the nations shall fall at your feet,  
For you alone are God!

*O Lord, you are good and forgiving.*

Slow to anger, abounding in love,  
Take pity on me, Lord!

*O Lord, you are good and forgiving.*

**Now, either read slowly to yourself this story from the Gospel according to Matthew or better still, read it aloud, again slowly.**

*From the Gospel according to Matthew 13:24-33*



He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would

uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.’

He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.’

The Gospel of the Lord.



**Spend a few moments allowing some aspect of the Gospel – a word/phrase or image – to touch you more deeply and read this part a second time, aloud if possible.**

## The reflection on the gospel is provided by Kathleen McGhee, a Sister of Notre Dame.



Time is something we all have. Sometimes we have too much of it, sometimes we don't have enough but we cannot escape it one way or another. We are most comfortable when we think we are in charge of it; we like a tidy beginning, a middle and an end! Indeed that is often how we organise life: by keeping time. Life, the great mystery we think we can control by putting it in some kind of chronological order.

The parables in today's Gospel are all about time. They are about those blocks of time that we don't like very much; those times when, far from being in control, we actually have to wait. The woman baking bread has to wait till the yeast has leavened the whole mixture; the birds have to wait for the tiny mustard seed to grow into a large shrub; the farmer has to wait until all the seeds in his field, good and bad, have fully grown. Only then can he distinguish the wheat from the weeds. He has to wait patiently for nature to take its course. His servants want to rush in and start weeding early in the growing process. They want to take control of the field as soon as possible – no time to be lost! The farmer restrains them; it is too soon to be sure of knowing the good from the bad. They must wait patiently.

Jesus is teaching his disciples, and us, about the mystery of the Kingdom of God. The good seed is the kingdom and the sower is Jesus himself. The kingdom is to be established in God's time not ours. Like the servants we might be inclined to rush in to get things sorted in our way, and in our haste destroy indiscriminately, so preventing the gentle, natural process of growth to take its own course.

This requires patience. If the woman interrupts the proving process before it is complete, the bread is spoiled; if the birds peck at the seeds before the tree has grown they will not have shelter. If we fail to recognise what God sows in us, we will not grow in faith, hope and love. We will not have “life and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

Jesus wants his followers to believe that his Kingdom is coming; not an earthly kingdom but a kingdom of “justice, love and peace.” Again and again in example after example he emphasises that it will not come quickly but through the slow, quiet organic growth that flourishes step by step in our hearts. We are to wait patiently until gradually it is given to us to know, not by our own effort or in our own time, but by God’s grace, through faith, how to discern the good. Slowly but surely, we begin to glimpse the mystery that is the Kingdom of God here on earth.

St. Paul uses the self-same analogy to proclaim the kingdom, when he prays that “Christ may live in your hearts through faith, then planted in love and grounded in love” you will know “the love of Christ which is beyond all knowledge and be filled with the utter fullness of God.”

Of such is the Kingdom of God.



## Take a few moments to receive and reflect on this poem by Denise Levertov.



### *On the Parables of the Mustard Seed*

Who ever saw the mustard-plant,  
wayside weed or tended crop,  
grow tall as a shrub, let alone a tree, a treeful  
of shade and nests and songs?  
Acres of yellow,  
not a bird of the air in sight.  
No. He who knew  
the west wind brings  
the rain, the south wind  
thunder, who walked the field-paths  
running His hand along wheat stems to glean  
those intimate milky kernels, good  
to break on the tongue,  
was talking of miracle, the seed  
within us, so small  
we take it for worthless, a mustard-seed, dust,  
nothing.  
Glib generations mistake  
the metaphor, not looking at fields and trees,  
not noticing paradox. Mountains  
remain unmoved.  
Faith is rare, He must have been saying,  
prodigious, unique –  
one infinitesimal grain divided  
like loaves and fishes,  
*as if* from a mustard-seed  
a great shade-tree grew. That rare,  
that strange: the kingdom  
a tree. The soul  
a bird. A great concourse of birds  
at home there, wings among yellow flowers.  
The waiting  
kingdom of faith, the seed  
waiting to be sown.



**As a result of your reflection, offer some prayers of intercession for the people and situations in our world today that seem to you to be most in need.**

*Let's begin with the prayer Archbishop Malcolm has asked us to pray at this time and then you may like to include one or more of prayers that follow and/or add your own:*



God Our Father,  
each person is precious to You.  
You are the Giver of life.  
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,  
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.  
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.  
Watch over those who are suffering,  
give strength to those who are aiding the sick  
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.  
We ask this of you in the name of your Son.  
Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

We pray for wisdom for all who serve in leadership during these days of uncertainty and threat ... that planning the future will be undertaken in a spirit of inclusivity and concern for the poorest and weakest across our global network.

We pray for all who, returning to work, find themselves on the brink of redundancy and unemployment ... may they be supported by loving families and communities in seeking new opportunities.

We pray for all who are starting or continuing treatment for cancer ... that they will suffer no ill effects as a result of the delays resulting from COVID-19.

We pray for all those who are close to death and those who have recently died ... may they know the deep peace of the Risen Lord.

We pray now in the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father,  
who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

**To end your time of reflection, listen to *Seek ye first.***



Seek ye first the Kingdom of God  
And His righteousness  
And all these things shall be added unto you  
Allelu Alleluia

*Alleluia, Alleluia*  
*Alleluia*  
*Allelu Alleluia*

Ask and it shall be given unto you  
Seek and ye shall find  
Knock and it shall be opened unto you  
Allelu Alleluia

*Alleluia, Alleluia*  
*Alleluia*  
*Allelu Alleluia*

We do not live by bread alone  
But by ev'ry word  
That comes forth from the mouth of God  
Allelu Alleluia

*Alleluia, Alleluia*  
*Alleluia*  
*Allelu Alleluia*

Where two or three are gathered in my name  
There am I in your midst;  
And whatsoever you ask I will do  
Allelu Alleluia

*Alleluia, Alleluia*  
*Alleluia*  
*Allelu Alleluia*

## **Acknowledgements**

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