**11th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle B**

**June 13/14, 20015**

**Ezekiel 17: 22-24; 2 Cor. 5: 6-10; Mk 4: 26-34**

“It shall put forth branches and bear fruit and become a majestic cedar. Birds of every kind shall dwell beneath it and the shade of its boughs. I, the Lord, bring low the high tree and lift the lowly tree. As I, the Lord, have spoken, so will I do.” Ez 17:22-24

Where is the Church today? Is it a lowly tree being lifted high, or a high tree being brought low? Is it, as Ezekiel described, a young green tree full of life, or a withered one?

It seems like many people have many different opinions of the Church, lots of opinions, feelings and beliefs about who she is, what she is about, and what their relationship is and ought to be with the Catholic Church. Indeed, so many are attracted to her for a variety of reasons, and many seem repelled by her for a variety of reasons. Sadly, very few in today’s world understand her, or to say it differently, so many misunderstand who she is and what she is about.

The Church is ever young, and yet so very ancient. The Church is so full of life and activity, so full of spirit and she bears such wonderful fruit with her charitable works, her educational institutions, her advocacy for the unborn, the aged, the ill, and in so many other ways, yet she is wounded by the sin of her people, her members and so the Church to some is a withered useless tree best cut to the ground (and many are trying to do just that). For others though she is a tree in which they rest, live, and find refreshment, she is a magnificent community of believers who make up the Mystical Body of Christ, she is beautiful beyond description, and she is present in the smallest and most ordinary of places, hidden from view, always at work. She is humble and bold, holy and marred by sin, elegant yet commonplace, but she is the Kingdom of God!

My friends, the Church ***is the Kingdom of God***, which Jesus proclaims in today’s Gospel. The Church is the high tree brought low at times, and the lowly tree raised high. She is the house of God, the dwelling place of the Most High. She is the People of God, you and me. She is the sheep of God’s flock, she is the Body of Christ, and we, ***all of us***, must find our home in her, in her branches, under her boughs, sustained by her grace and the sacraments. We, the People of God, cannot live or love, grow or thrive in this world, and become who we were created to be, without her.

Yes, our home is the Church, the Body of Christ, the community of believers, this Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed. We find our home in this Kingdom, walking by faith and with great courage.

Jesus continually proclaims in the Gospel that the Kingdom of God has come, has suddenly been revealed in our lives, in our time, in our world. Just as in his day very people left Jesus and did not follow him because they did not understand his teaching, so too today so many misunderstand. Today, as in Jesus’ time, many would want to silence her voice outside of these church walls. Jesus tells us though that we must scatter the seeds of faith and truth in our society and world.

We must sow the seed of faith in our world today! We must scatter the seed of life, of love, of truth, of fidelity and obedience, of justice, the seed of the Gospel. Each and every day we must wake up, get up and go out to sow perhaps what may seem the smallest of seeds in every corner of our lives, in our families, in our parishes, in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods. We must trust God, wait and watch in faith. The harvest comes after we are gone. We must water and nurture what we sow. We must scatter everywhere and often.

My dear people, we must find a home, a place of refreshment in God’s Kingdom, always walking courageously by faith in our world today. We must proclaim Jesus Christ in his Church. We must walk with faith, always in love, in a world which rejects God’s Kingdom all too often.

To those who would silence her or crush her, I can only say that it is in the Church that I and so many others have encountered Jesus Christ, that it is only in the Catholic Church that I have been given the Eucharist, that it is in the Church that I have found peace and forgiveness, that it is in the Church that my life has meaning and purpose. These are the same gifts given to each of you. Let us embrace God’s Kingdom and scatter the seed of the Gospel always!