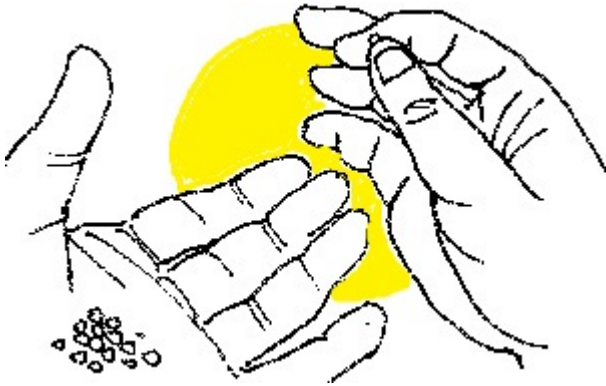


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by Pat Marrin

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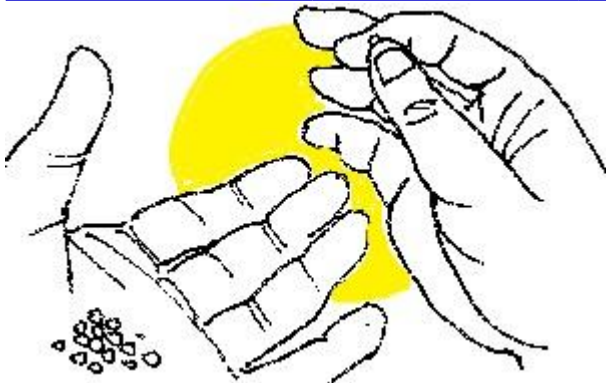
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June 12, 2021

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“As I, the LORD, have spoken, so will I do” (Ezekiel 17:24).

**Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*Ezek 17:22-24; Ps 92; 2 Cor 5:6-10; Mark 4:26-34*

Long car trips with our seat-secure son in the late 1980s were always accompanied by the songs of Raffi, a popular Canadian songwriter. “Baby Beluga” and “Oats and Beans and Barley Grow” come to mind, but the favorite was “Everything Grows and Grows.” It celebrated the unstoppable energy of nature to keep the world going and growing. A little boy singing along soon outgrew his car seat to take the wheel. Everything grows.

The parables and miracles of Jesus capture this energy. A tiny mustard seed escapes a spice garden, taking over roadsides and fields. It attracts and shelters chattering birds that invade the surrounding fields. It is life bordering on chaos. There is a parody hidden in the image. The official expectation was that God would make the kingdom of Israel like a mighty cedar towering over the forest of nations. Jesus proclaims his kingdom as a pesky shrub that spreads everywhere and welcomes everyone.

The parable also shows how much potential can be packed into small beginnings. How many miracles have unfolded from a simple act of kindness that inspired a network of recipients paying it forward? Take the first step and find an unexpected treasure waiting on step two or three. Trust the inherent goodness of life and the good will of others, who, like you, have been waiting for someone to inspire them to do more.

A farmer tills the soil, scatters seed, then sleeps while the harvest springs up by itself. The generous soil waits for a hopeful sower. The lilies of the field come arrayed like royalty, preach their gospel of beauty, then take a bow and disappear. The tiny sparrows fill the skies with birdsong and precision aerial ballet, never worrying whether God will provide for them. A woman adds a bit of leaven to flour, and it produces enough bread to feed the entire village. Jesus fed the five thousand hungry people in the wilderness, and there were 12 wicker baskets of leftovers for breakfast. He tells his night-weary disciples to cast their nets on the other side of the boat, and they catch enough fish to break the nets and swamp the boats.

One of the most memorable lines in Scripture is, “I have come that you might have life, life to the full” (John 10:9). Jesus reveals an extravagant God whose mercy is limitless and free. There is always enough. The abundance of nature is the first Bible we receive. It teaches the wisdom of extravagance. Give and you will receive.

Sow and you will reap. Give yourself to love and love will multiply your life one hundredfold.

Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* is not an argument. It is an invitation to praise Creation, then turn gratitude into the determination that future generations will not be deprived of this same gift. It is the one parable this generation needs right now to enter the kingdom of God.

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