

Planting Seeds of Faith

Intro. Signs are everywhere. The azaleas are bursting out all over. The past few weekends the garden store down the street has been jammed with customers lined up for fertilizer and flowers to plant. Although it doesn't seem like it, the first day of Spring is/was today/yesterday. Other signs tell us we are coming back to life. More and more of us are getting vaccinated every day. The scriptures of Lent lead us closer to Easter. The Lord is in Jerusalem, celebrating Passover for the final time. Signs say the hour has come.

I. The gospel opens with a visit by Greeks who came to Jerusalem. I was curious why John mentioned them so I checked some resources. The Greeks were like tourists, the sightseers of their time.

They were also known as seekers of knowledge [*The Gospel of John*, W. Barclay, Westminster Press, 1975]. They came to Jerusalem to be part of the festival. Apparently they heard of Jesus of Nazareth and were curious about him. They went straight to one of his disciples. Philip was a Greek-sounding name and thinking him one of them, figured he wouldn't turn them away. It was also another sign the kingdom of God was for all people. Throughout his ministry, the Lord planted seeds. He used the image that the seed must give up its life to bring forth food or flowers. The seed he was planting was his own life. His death brought redemption from sin; the paradox of life from death. In this gospel, we hear the human part of him briefly anxious about the days to come but not letting that divert his attention.

The people heard the Father affirming the Lord's mission.

Concl. One year in seminary I was assigned to a local parish in Palm Beach to teach religion to high school students. Oh, joy! For them and for me. After a few weeks of getting little response from my class, I was very discouraged. I told one of the other teachers I wasn't a very good teacher. She told me a secret. If you are a teacher you know this truth. She said what we were doing is planting seeds. We may not see them sprout and grow, but some day the seeds *would* spring up and give life to some of those students. I take strength from the fact that not all of the seeds *the Lord* planted took root in *his* lifetime. From our history, both religious and civil, we know many people gave their lives to pass on the great truths about faith and life. Those seeds – lives given

in service to others - were planted in us by parents, teachers and our church. We in turn plant seeds in others. **As Easter draws near I believe, more so than in years past, we are dying to break out of the “tomb” of our separation from one another and from the Lord and return to our lives. But we are changed by the experience. We are ready for resurrection and a renewed life in Christ we celebrate in two short weeks.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

Fifth Sunday, Lent, 03/21/2021