

## 15 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday    The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and the Mustard Seed

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is an approach for the religious education of children. It is rooted in the Bible, the liturgy of the church, and the educational principles of Maria Montessori. The CGS begins with preschoolers, and we have it at St. Benedict for 35 years!

The Mustard Seed is one of the first parables the children learn in the CGS, and it speaks so deeply to them that they return to it again and again. There is a profound movement in the children's understanding of this parable that illustrates the parable itself! It is a movement from something small to something great!

At age three, children marvel at the small seed that can grow into such a great shrub. Over time they realize that it is a power within the seed itself that allows it to grow, and they perceive God as the giver of this great gift. As they revisit this parable, they perceive this power, not only in the mustard seed, but in countless seeds, flowers, trees and bushes all around them. Before long they discover that this great power from God is at work throughout the world - and even in their own bodies! And, they come to know that the Kingdom of God is just like this!

There are two key points from the Mustard Seed. First, the mustard seed is the smallest of seeds but grows into one of the largest shrubs. In this we see the dramatic transformation from something that begins small but expands into something big. If we look at this in the light of the Church, she began small with just Jesus and a handful of disciples, but has grown to the point where Christianity is proclaimed and Jesus is believed in throughout the world.

The second point is that this tree-like shrub grows so large that birds of the air come and nest or take shelter in its branches. A tree is a place of shelter and protection from the elements and from predators. The Kingdom of God is the same. When we come to Christ we find a place of rest where the Lord cares for our spiritual needs. When we are among brethren, we receive teaching and assistance to learn and grow in the Lord and so walk in his ways. We could bring peace, reconciliation, compassion, justice, and charity to those around us—and the world. A small act of charity planted in someone's life could grow into big reality of God's presence in his or her life.

With God, something so small could become so large, powerful, and great. This holds true in our personal lives too. Jesus said: *"If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."* Matt.17:20

Do you have any mountains that need to be moved in your life? All you need to move it is real faith the size of a mustard seed.

Let's build God's Kingdom among us. Let us put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus.