

# Sunday Message

## THE WORD

### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

### GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

### COLLECT

Lord, through the work of Saint Patrick in Ireland we have come to acknowledge the mystery of the one true God and give thanks for our salvation in Christ; grant by his prayers that we who celebrate this festival may keep alive the fire of faith he kindled. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### FIRST READING Ecclesiasticus 39:6-10

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus. If it is the will of the great Lord, this scholar will be filled with the spirit of understanding, he will shower forth words of wisdom, and in prayer give thanks to the Lord. He will grow upright in purpose and learning, he will ponder the Lord's hidden mysteries. He will display the instruction he has received, taking his pride in the Law of the Lord's covenant. Many will praise his understanding, and it will never be forgotten. His memory will not disappear, generation after generation his name will live. Nations will proclaim his wisdom, the assembly will celebrate his praises. The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

### PSALM Psalm 115

Response: How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me?

1. How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me? The cup of salvation I will raise; I will call on the Lord's name. (R.)
2. My vows to the Lord I will fulfil before all his people. O precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful. (R.)
3. Your servant, Lord, your servant am I; you have loosened my bonds. A thanksgiving sacrifice I make; I will call on the Lord's name. (R.)
4. My vows to the Lord I will fulfil before all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem. (R.)

### SECOND READING 2 Timothy 4:1-8

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to Timothy

Before God and before Christ Jesus who is to be judge of the living and the dead, I put his duty to you, in the name of his Appearing and insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience – but do all with patience and with intention of teaching. The time is sure to come when, far from being content with sound teaching, people will be avid for the latest novelty and collect themselves a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes; and then, instead of listening to the truth, they will turn to myths. Be careful always to choose the right course; be brave under trials; make the preaching of the Good News your life's work, in thoroughgoing service.

As for me, my life is already being poured away as a libation, as the time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith; all there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his Appearing.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Glorify to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God! Accept and submit to the word which has been planted in you and can save your souls. Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!

### GOSPEL Matthew 13:24-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus put a parable before the crowds: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat and made off. When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. The owner's servants went to him and said, 'Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?' 'Some enemy has done this,' he answered. And the servants said, 'Do you want us to go and weed it out?' But he said,

'No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn.' "

He put another parable before them: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air can come and shelter in its branches."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

### PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

### PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord, accept this pure sacrifice which, through the labours of Saint Patrick, your grateful people make to the glory of your name. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of heaven, says the Lord.

### PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Strengthen us, O Lord, by this sacrament so that we may profess the faith taught by Saint Patrick and proclaim it in our way of living. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## IRELAND AND PATRICK'S CHURCH

(MATT 13:24-32)



The Gospel for today's feast of St Patrick presents us with two parables about the Kingdom of God. In the first example, known generally as the *Weeds in the Wheat*, we are confronted with the question of what to do about people who do not seem to conform to the rules or standards expected of members of the community.

There are two problems: first of all, while the plants are growing, it is very difficult to distinguish the weeds from the good shoots. Secondly, to try to root out the unwanted stems will result in untold damage to the seed-bearing plants, which will either be trampled or uprooted as well. Jesus counsels patience and tolerance: there will be a judgment eventually – better leave it to God.

The second parable is usually interpreted as the Kingdom growing from small beginnings into something glorious, encompassing people from all over the world. The image of the mustard seed is taken from the vision of Ezekiel, when the prophet looks to the restoration of the ruined people of Israel after their exile in Babylon. ■

### LEARN

The weeds in the first parable only reveal themselves as such when harvest time comes.

The parables are intended to cause us to reflect on our attitudes.

They are meant to help us to think as Jesus thinks.

The Kingdom of God is not to be identified with the church.

### DO

Take time to think quietly about the current state of the church in Ireland, the church founded by St Patrick. Could you see the crises of recent years as the Lord shaking up the church and its leaders? Could you see this as a time of purification, leading to a humbler, more tolerant community of disciples?

### REFLECT

The Kingdom of God is not identical with the church. However, the parables of the Kingdom are often applied to the church, and if we follow this practice there may well be food for thought in the two images which the Gospel puts before us today. In the church's history, there have been attempts to root out what some people in authority regard as heresy, that is, dangerous teachings which may lead the (apparently simple) faithful astray. The Inquisition is one example of this. In more recent times respectable scholars have been silenced, forbidden to teach, but often that judgment has been reversed and their suspension lifted. In the meantime, their work and reputation have been trampled upon, and their commitment to the Lord and the church disparaged. This happens due to the exaggerated zeal of some who, like the servants in the parable, think that they should simply root out views they perhaps do not understand, instead of engaging in a healthy and life-giving discussion.

The second parable is in some ways a puzzle. The mustard seed does not, in fact, grow into a great tree. If we apply this to the church, perhaps Jesus is saying that his church should not be a great and magnificent institution like the enormous and splendid cedar of Lebanon, but something humble, one shrub among many in the garden. Maybe Jesus has not made a mistake in his botany: he may well be turning the vision of Ezekiel on its head.

It would be an understatement to say the church has been going through a series of crises in recent years, but these crises are of human origin. Is the revealing of the various cover-ups the Lord's way of cutting the institution down to size, of showing that the church as an organisation is not the Kingdom, or that the leaders of the community should be patient, tolerant, humble, and take Jesus and his attitude as their example? ■

### SAY

Come, Holy Spirit, and renew the face of our church.