ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God,
you are full of power
and might and we are small
and not very strong.
Give us a share
in your power,
so that like a small seed,
your family may grow
all over the world
and more and more people
come to know about you
and Jesus, your Son,
who lives with you
forever and ever.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Both readings focus on the final, glorious coming of the reign of God. In the first reading, the "little branch" which God will take from a tall cedar, represents the remnant, the small group of Israelites who have remained faithful throughout the exile. But small though it may be, from it will come a "strong and beautiful tree. . . where all kinds of birds will build their nests." The focus of Ezekiel is that God will bring to glorious manifestation what is already present in the small remnant.

The focus of the Gospel is the same. The final glorious reign of God is already present in Jesus and in his followers. It is often small and hidden (mustard seed) and is not always easily detected, but will one day come to full growth in all its glory and splendor. God will bring to glorious manifestation what is already present in Jesus and his followers.

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 17:22-24

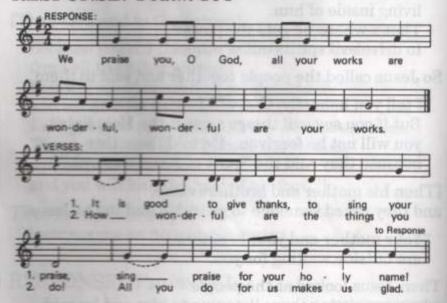
This is a reading from the prophet Ezekiel. Our God says,

I will take a tiny branch
from the very top of a cedar tree,
and I will plant it on a high mountain.
It will become a strong and beautiful tree
and good fruit will grow on its branches.
All kinds of animals will live in its shade
and birds will build their nests
in its branches.
And all the trees of the fields
will know that I am God.
I make high trees small and small trees high.
I dry up green trees
and make trees that are dried up

I am God, and I will do what I have said. This is the Word of God.

RESPONSE: Psalm 104

bloom again.



GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



GOSPEL: Mark 4:26-34

This is a reading from the Gospel of Mark. [Jesus said to his disciples,

"The reign of God is like this:
When a person plants a seed in the ground, it begins to grow. Day and night it grows whether the one who planted it is asleep or awake.
A farmer does not know exactly how a seed grows.
But, first it becomes like a blade of grass.
Later it looks like the head of wheat.
Then, when it is ripe, and ready to be harvested, the farmer cuts it."

Then] Jesus said to his disciples,

"Here is another example
of what the reign of God is like:
it is like a mustard seed.
A mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds.
But when it grows, it becomes very large
and its branches are so big
that birds can come
and make their nests in it
and be protected from the hot sun."

Jesus always taught the people by using examples like this so they would be able to understand. But whenever Jesus was alone with the twelve apostles, he explained everything to them.

This is the Good News of the Lord.

[] Reader may omit text that appears in brackets.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

The goal of our reflections will be to help the children see that the reign of God is already present among us—but will one day be fully seen. The seed is a good image of this.

Show the children a seed. Ask them what will come of it. Will it be a daisy, a carrot, a pine tree?

Now tell them what kind of seed it is and ask them again what will become of it. If it is a carrot seed, it will become a carrot (not a daisy or a pine tree) because the carrot is already present in the seed, but we cannot see it.

You may wish to use several examples. When the children understand the concept, ask them why Jesus said the "reign of God is like a mustard seed."

 How is the reign of God already present?

At the beginning of his public teaching, Jesus said, "The reign of God is here!" He meant that he brought the reign of God to earth. It is here among us because he is here among us. But sometimes we cannot see it. Why is it sometimes hard to see the reign of God already present among us? When we do not act as Jesus did, others cannot see him (the reign of God.)

Help the children to understand that when we pray, in the Lord's Prayer, "thy kingdom come" we pray that it will be seen.

How can we help that seed—the reign of God—to grow and to be seen by others? How will others see the fact that the reign of God is already here among us?

It is important that the reflections end positively. Our concentration should not be on how we *hinder* the reign of God, but how we *help* reveal it.