

Singing Our Faith

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time – June 17, 2018

We hear the parable of the sower and the parable of the mustard seed in Sunday's gospel. With Mark's simple and direct language, he fits these parables into two short paragraphs! As we are just starting off this summer block of Ordinary Time, these parables remind us of the **growing** nature of this liturgical season when we hear Jesus preaching in his public ministry.

The opening hymn is the new hymn we've been singing for the past two weeks – "Father, We Thank You Who Have Planted" which is found below. The opening line of this hymn reminds us that "the seed is the word of God; Christ the sower."

The history of both the text and music are significant and, when put together, ironic. By reading the text, it's easy to tell that it's simply a prayer. In fact, it has the same basic structure of many of the prayers of the Mass.

- 1) acknowledging God
- 2) thanking him for something he has done
- 3) asking him to do something.
- 4) asking the prayer to be heard through Jesus Christ

The fourth part is actually missing, but close enough! Now, if you look at the tiny copyright print at the bottom of the hymn, you'll see that it was translated from the **Didache**, which is one of the earliest records of Church catechesis, liturgy, ritual, and prayer dating back to the first century. It's no surprise then that this is structured like a

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prayer, since it was probably one of the prayers from the Mass in the first century. Parts of the Eucharistic Prayers used at Mass today come from this document as well. The Church and its traditions are timeless.

The musical history couldn't be more different. Although this is a new hymn for our parish, you may have thought the tune to be familiar upon hearing it for the first time. Indeed, it resembles the tune to "Praise God from whom all blessings flow..." or "All people that on earth do dwell..." Both of these come from "The Genevan Psalter" – a collection of metrical psalms created under John Calvin for use in the churches of the city of Geneva. John Calvin was the founder of Calvinism (modern day: Presbyterian) which broke off of the Catholic Church around the time of Luther's reformation. The tunes in the Genevan Psalter resemble the chorales of Martin Luther. These two are among the first collections of congregational music in the vernacular, since the Catholic Church's music was Gregorian Chant and polyphony sung in Latin by choirs.

So we have an ancient prayer text likely spoken by the Apostles themselves, and a hymn tune written 1500 years later by protestors of the Catholic Church. Not only that, but the text prays for unity and purity in the Church. There's beauty in irony!

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1. Fa - ther, we thank you, who have plant - ed
2. Watch o'er your Church, O Lord, in mer - cy,



Your ho - ly name with - in our hearts.
Save it from e - vil, guard it still;



Knowl - edge and faith and life im - mor - tal
Per - fect it in your love, u - nite it,



Je - sus and your Son to us im - parts.
Cleansed and con - formed un - to your will.



Lord, you have made all for your pleas - ure,
As grain, once scat - tered on the hill - sides,



And giv'n us food for all our days,
Was in this bro - ken bread made one,



Giv - ing in Christ the bread e - ter - nal;
So from all lands your Church be gath - ered



Yours is the pow'r, yours be the praise.
In - to your king - dom by your Son.