



'Discouragement' is an ever-present danger in our Christian and Franciscan life. At times or another, we feel like giving up the struggles and start living up without worrying too much about the demands of our Christian and Franciscan vocation. There could be many reasons for it. One main reason could be our personal weakness; no matters how much we try, we keep on relapsing into sin time and again. So, why try again! The other reason could be coming from our Christian and Franciscan community; disunity, selfness, lack of faith, lack of vocation to religious or consecrated life and hard rules, etc.

So, then we are left to ask questions; what's the future of the Church and Franciscan Order? Will the Church and the Order survive?

Jesus, through the parable of the 'Mustard Seed' boosts our courage and teaches us that the success of the Kingdom of God is more God's work and doing than ours. We need to trust less ourselves and place in God our total confidence. What God needs from us is to continue to carry out His will all through our life in spite of the weakness we have. Unless we ourselves prevent it, the Kingdom of God continues to grow without our knowing how. The farmer after sowing the seeds waits patiently for the seed to sprout and grow. He furthers weeds and protects the field from the wild animals. Rest of the work is done by God who alone can provide the rain and sunshine for the seeds to grow. Farmer works for a while whereas God is at work all the time. None of us can explain the mystery behind the growth of a seed. It is God's work and wisdom that make the seed grow and produce abundantly.

Compare the imagery of 'Mustard Seed' to our Christian and Franciscan vocation; the seed of faith- the kingdom and reign of God has sprouted on the day of our baptism. On the day we first learned and encountered St. Francis of Assisi, something within us inspired us to follow his spirituality. This seed, though tiny given by parents or others, silently keeps on growing unless we destroy it by our serious sin. Through prayer, Eucharist, sacraments and spiritual practices as the rain and sunshine, we can make the seed grow and bear abundant fruits. So, let us not be discouraged when we see slow growth or no growth at all for a time. But find every occasion to nurture our faith and vocation and continue to do the will of God in our life in spite of our weakness and occasional failures we face.

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