

St Peter Nolasco (1189 –1256) was born at Mas-des-Saintes-Puelles in France, although some historians claim he was born in Barcelona. In 1218 he formed a congregation of men that became the Royal and Military Order of Our Lady of Mercy of the Redemption of the Captives (the Mercedarians).



First Reading: (Heb 10:32 - 39) Recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on the prisoners, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised. "For yet a little while, and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls.

Pss 36:3-6, 23-24, 39-40

R./ The salvation of the just comes from the Lord.

Gospel: (Mk 4:26-34) Jesus said to his disciples, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

REFLECTION

Today's Gospel presents two parables, that of "the seed that grows by itself" and of "the small mustard seed which grows into the biggest shrub", addressed as words of encouragement to the early struggling Church, living in small, scattered communities and surrounded by hostile forces ready to destroy it. In the first, the farmer has to put in the effort, he can observe the process of growth, and yet bringing the seed to fruition is not under his control. The point is that we have our part in proclaiming the Gospel, but the outcome is due to the power of God and we can count on God for it. The parable of the mustard seed, having in Jesus' day the proverbial status as the smallest seed, focuses on the contrast between the small beginnings of the kingdom and the certainty of its great future. **Through these 'Kingdom of God' parables, Mark calls our attention to the dynamic reality of God's presence and power within the creation and within the lives of God's people and to the certainty of its prevailing over all other powers.**