

Homily based on the readings from July 27, 2026 (Jeremiah 3.14-17;
Matthew 13.18-23)

During the height of summer, it is fitting that the Church has given us so many readings that focus on fertility, on fruitfulness, on growth. At a basic level, we all know that God is the author of everything that lives and moves and has its being. God made the heavens and the earth, and everything they contain: plants yielding seed, trees bearing fruit, living creatures that swarm in the sea and in the air. And, of course, he created human beings – all of us – in his own image and likeness.

God does far more for us, though, than simply granting us existence. Remember the parable of the sower, one of the central texts from the Gospel of Matthew. Based on its external appearance, an individual seed is fairly unimpressive but, under the right conditions, it can blossom into a flower, a shrub, or a tree – almost any imaginable form of vegetation. The parable itself speaks about the menaces that threaten to destroy the seed or to strangle the newborn plant: hungry birds, shallow

soil, thorny ground – each representing a different danger we face as hearers of the word of God. There is a simple question, though, that is not addressed explicitly in the parable: if each of us is a seed, what *is* it that we are intended to become? To put it plainly, what sort of plant does God want us to be?

The Gospel of Matthew, of course, contains two other important seed-based parables: the parable of the wheat and the weeds and – the one we just heard a few moments ago – the parable of the mustard seed. The mustard seed reminds us that God can make a great plant out of a tiny seed – that he creates amazing works from the humblest materials. On the other hand, the wheat and the weeds reminds us that *growth*, in itself, is never sufficient. The *evil* grows just as vigorously as the *good*, if not more so.

Consider, for a moment, the saints of the Church – the great flowering plants who have blossomed continuously over the past 2000 years.

Despite their incredible variety, all of these outstanding individuals had

at least one major attribute in common: they were all willing to devote the *fullness* of their lives to Jesus Christ, even to the point of death. As our Lord declares in the Gospel of John:

[U]nless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.

Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life.

All of the saints, particularly those who sacrificed their lives as martyrs, served as *witnesses* to this basic principle of the Christian faith. There is an ancient saying that *the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church*. That is precisely the kind of seed we are *all* called to be, the kind of plant we must *all* strive to become. It is through willingly offering up our own lives – in *imitation* of Christ and on *behalf* of Christ – that those of us who long to be *wheat* can separate ourselves, firmly and finally, from the weeds.