



Vincent van Gogh The Sower, 1888

*THE GOSPEL.* [Mark 4:26-34](#)

*To what shall we compare the kingdom of God,  
or what parable can we use for it?*

O  
God,

like  
the tiny  
mustard plant,  
give us your roots.

Dig down deep into our souls!  
Storm into our hearts and minds!  
Grow into so large a plant  
that all of our actions  
all of our ideas,  
all our loves

nestle  
and shelter  
in your branches.

Make all of your people,  
all of the birds of the sky and  
all of creation dwell in our shade.

*THE FIRST READING. Ezekiel 17:22-24*

*Thus says the Lord God: I, too, will take from the crest of the cedar,  
from its topmost branches tear off a tender shoot,  
and plant it on a high and lofty mountain!*

Lord God,  
Please love our topmost branches.  
Cleanse the tender shoot  
that is our heart.

Do your  
wondrous works.

Let us put forth fruit  
and branches  
that sweep  
the sky.

Let birds of every kind dwell there,  
every winged thing, in the  
shade of their  
boughs.

*THE SECOND READING 2 Corinthians 5:6-10*

*Therefore, we aspire to please him, whether we are at home or away.*

Lord,  
whether we dwell at home or far away  
guide our steps into your path.

Help us heal some of the pain  
we find in neighbors  
and in our  
planet.

Fill us with your courage,  
walking by faith,  
not by sight.

Anne Osdieck

## *Reflection*

by Timothy Radcliffe O.P.

### **When the Rough Winds Blow**

Mustard bushes are gangly, and no bird of any size could make its nest in one. The nest would slide off, or the branch would break. Few would find much shade under cover of a mustard bush. So either Jesus was an ignorant townie or else he was gently, lovingly teasing. The dream of Israel, Ezekiel tells us, was to become like a magnificent, towering Lebanon cedar, the greatest tree of the Middle East. But Jesus says that God's promise of home would be fulfilled in a common weed that sprang up everywhere and was without any pretensions or glory.

The Church of my youth certainly aspired to be a Lebanon cedar, with high status, important institutions, much wealth, and its clergy and religious often expecting reverence. Today, our Church has been diminished by scandal; the clergy are regarded with suspicion, and many people are embarrassed to call themselves Catholic. We have become distinctly more like a mustard bush, a poor shelter when the rough winds blow. But it is an unimpressive weed such as this that the Lord offers us as our home.

Once it has been sown, the mustard bush is hard to get rid of. Barbara Reid, OP, remarks, "So too is the tenacious faith of those who seem to be of no account." Despite all the efforts of the righteous of this world to get rid of it, the bush hangs on, as it will until the Lord comes again and humanity finds its home in God.