

Dear Friends,

“The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in the field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the *birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.*”

[Matthew 13.31]

To grow and develop is fundamental to being human. A life's project is to become full grown. Jesus' use of the kingdom of heaven is instructive in this regard.

The mustard seed is small and within its core are growth and size. It becomes what it is meant to be – a shelter for the birds of the sky. The same can be applied to us.

To become who we truly are also requires our cooperation with God's beautiful creation, which is us. Being each different the common denominator is being made in the 'image of God'. A rich tradition and fundamental truth proclaimed throughout Christian history.

Offer now with one accord to the Virgin the most desirable and appropriate gift, your sanctification and bodily purity through self-control and prayer. See, all of you, how chastity, fasting, and prayer, linked with contrition, made Joachim and Anna the parents of a divine vessel, a vessel chosen not just to bear the name of God, like Saint Paul, who was to be born later, but to bear him whose name is Wonderful (Is 9:5). If we persevere in our prayers as well as the other virtues, continuing in God's temple with understanding, we shall find stored up within ourselves that purity of heart, which holds God and manifests him to us.

If we wish to dwell not on earth but in heaven, and not to fall to the ground or into sin that pulls us down, but to reach out continuously towards the divine heights, let us fear God, abstain from everything evil, return to him through good works, and strive by self-control and prayer to wipe out the evil within us, to change our inner thoughts for the better, and to be in labor

with the spirit of salvation and bring it to birth – having as our helper, through invoking her name, the Virgin who was bestowed upon her parents through prayer, and a manner of life pleasing to God. She transformed their sorrow, annulled the ancestral curse, and brought our first mother's pangs to an end, painlessly bearing Christ in her virginity, To him belongs all glory, honor, and worship together with his Father and the all-holy, good, Life-giving Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen. [Saint Gregor Palamas]

Sincerely,
Father Beaudin