

Raniero Cantalamessa is a Franciscan priest and the preacher to the papal household. When the Pope goes on retreat, he is the one who gives the talks.

Over Pentecost I was reading his book on the Holy Spirit and I would like to share with you a few of his words.

“In the modern concept of human existence choice plays a definitive role. If we refuse to accept that we exist as human beings according to the model and design defined by the Word of God, our humanity becomes something we have to define over and over again, a design that is totally open ended. Like a river, people hollow out their own beds as they go along. Human beings are what they make of themselves by their exercise of their autonomous will. This is the source of the anxiety that goes hand in hand with the secularized view of human existence. For to choose is necessarily also to renounce, and if there is no objective criterion for any choice, every choice becomes a reason to be anxious.”

In every choice there is a renunciation. Every time we say yes to something, when we choose a certain path, we have to say no to all kinds of other options, all kinds of other paths. Our choices define who we are and if there are no objective criterion, no real positive reasons to go in a certain direction than we can easily be overwhelmed. We are filled with anxiety because we can only see what we will lose because in the end there really is nothing to be gained.

When we read the Gospels, we often hear Jesus speak about the Kingdom of God. Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near. The Kingdom is within you. It is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God. So many of the parables speak of the Kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is like. Today's readings, the kingdom of God is like the farmer whose seed grows as he is unaware.

The Kingdom of God is like the mustard seed, the smallest of seeds, that grows into the greatest of shrubs.

It is a nebulous concept but we sort of understand what it means. There is something or as Christians we say there is someone to whom we swear allegiance, to whom we owe our existence, by whose word we form our lives. There is someone who reigns; it is Jesus who is Lord.

Today's parables are about seeds, seeds that grow and flourish. The seeds of God's Kingdom have been planted within us. Are we nurturing those seeds? Are they growing within us? What are we willing to give up? To renounce in the name of Christ? Are we choosing the kingdom or are we filled with anxious concern because we are choosing our own path?