

Reflecting on the Kingdom of God

Motivation is what moves us to live and act. It operates as the deep source for why we do anything, showing what kind of person we are and revealing our long-term goals. In my work, as a priest, a chaplain, a theologian, and in my work for CAFOD, I have many motivations. But I can trace all of them back to one idea, one ideal: the Kingdom of God.

A realm of compassion and justice

The Kingdom of God that Jesus has brought is a realm of compassion and justice which, although it is imperfect now, will be perfected by God at the end of time. Still, every single gesture of compassion and every small contribution to a just society that we can make, may not only improve people's current lives, but also shape our future in a special way, since these gestures are being written in the book of eternity.

As Jesus explains (in Mark 4:26-34), the Kingdom is like a mustard seed because it starts with small things, is based on community life, families, grass-root movements, on small though significant gestures and words.

Although the mustard seed can grow into a big shrub, it never becomes a noble cedar or any other tree. However, it grows big enough to have large branches and allow the birds to shelter in its shade. The Kingdom/shrub develops by sheltering all kinds of birds. This means that we can all find refuge in it, temporarily or permanently. And we can all make a contribution to this Kingdom of loving relationships. Is this not marvellous?

I find it fascinating that the Kingdom of God can be enhanced and served by imperfect creatures like us, like me. We are all involved, believers and non-believers alike, young and elderly people, rich and poor. We may not be deeply just or truly compassionate people but, through the Spirit of righteousness and love of Christ, we can promote justice and reconciliation. For me, this is a strong reason to minister as a priest and study moral theology.

Nevertheless, I am aware – from personal experience and the experiences of others – that we can also prevent just relationships from flourishing, that we can find other shelters where we are not allowing our humanity to express its best potential. We have to work hard sometimes, to ensure that we are following the right path, that we are truly serving the Kingdom of God.

And so, my main motivation in life is to live in and work for this realm of compassion and justice, a realm that needs to be generated by our relationships with others. God's reign, although it is constantly being threatened by our sins and greed, will not be defeated by them nor even by death.

This reflection is by Fr Augusto Zampini, an Argentinean priest, currently studying at Roehampton University. He is a member of CAFOD's Theological Reference Group and travelled to Zimbabwe earlier this year, to see CAFOD's work on the ground.