

JULY 28 2025 FATHER PETER TURRONE

A few months ago, we were on pilgrimage overseas. We got up very early in the morning—about 3:00 a.m.—and boarded a bus to go to St. Peter's Basilica. It was the first official audience, the Wednesday audience, of Pope Leo XIV. There was so much excitement and anticipation—as there still is.

We waited for several hours in the piazza. People were speaking so many different languages. It was remarkable to witness. From all over the world, they had come together to pray and to listen to the successor of Peter.

I looked around at the different columns and the statues of saints from different historical periods. Just in front of us was the tomb of Peter. Then came the American pope, greeted by people and bands from all over the world, each singing hymns in their own native languages. It's absolutely remarkable that the Church—the Catholic Church, the universal Church—is like a mother who embraces over a billion people around the world.

When Jesus told this parable, the apostles and disciples were listening: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of seeds, yet when fully grown, it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches."

I don't think the apostles realized what was going to happen—that their fidelity to the mission entrusted to them by Jesus would lead to the Church as we know it today. Think about it: today, there are over 1.4 billion Catholics. That doesn't even include all the baptized men, women, and children throughout the world. People from every tribe, nation, and tongue.

John caught a glimpse of this while in exile on Patmos. It's a beautiful and great gift to recognize how something that started off so small could become so vast. The kingdom of God, "in seed," is already here and continues to grow.

It all began with the apostles—twelve simple men, chosen by the Lord. With their own weaknesses and strengths, they were given the charism to proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ to the whole world. They were faithful to their mission wherever they were sent. Because of their love for God and for the people who would come after them—including us—they were able to do what they did.

St. John Chrysostom wrote a beautiful commentary. He noted that in spite of the apostles' weaknesses, the Lord used them to grow the Church in leaps and bounds. And now the Church welcomes everyone—a home for all.

The columns of St. Peter's Basilica remind us that the Church is a mother. The Church is female—she is the bride of Christ and the mother of Christians. She embraces all people, drawing them to the Father.

If the apostles could have seen the Church as it is today, I wonder what they would have thought. And imagine what it could be 2,000 years from now! We don't know what the face of the Church will be in the future. But we do know this: we need patience.

Just as God is patient with us, we must be patient with ourselves—and with God's plans.

In the first reading, we heard of a big problem. God had saved his people from slavery and oppression. But despite the miracles he worked through Moses, the people grew impatient. They wanted to grasp divinity in their own terms—something tangible, made in their image.

So they committed a grave sin: idolatry. They made an image of gold and worshipped it.

They didn't want to wait for God or trust his timing. But remember what God said to Moses: "I am who I am." We cannot put God in our pocket. We must surrender to him in humility and patience, allowing the Lord to act as he wills.

Just as he did through the disciples, he gave us this beautiful Church—a mother to all, present across the world. Mass is celebrated in different languages by different peoples and cultures. Within the Church's many rites, each culture preserves what is good, true, and beautiful. When Christianized, that goodness becomes radiant and clear for all.

This need for patience applies not just to the Church universal but to each of us personally. We pray—and maybe we don't receive an answer. Or maybe the answer isn't what we wanted. Or maybe God is simply asking us to wait.

Be faithful in the small things, like the tiny amount of yeast. If what we do is done out of love for God and neighbour, it will grow. It will bear fruit.

So we ask the Lord again for the grace to recognize the beauty of our faith—the gift of faith and the gift of the Church. Each of us is a mustard seed. No matter how small we feel or what charisms we've been given, we can all be used in God's hands for his glory and the building up of his kingdom on earth, in anticipation of the eternal kingdom.

We pray for the continued fruitfulness of the Church. And especially for our brothers and sisters in the mission fields—those working tirelessly, hidden from the eyes of the world and social media—may the Lord bless their labours, so that many more will become part of our beautiful Church.