

SIMPLY ADD WATER

Christmas is now far away, but some Christmas presents take a while to reveal their hidden secrets. I'm thinking of those amazing amaryllis flowers, you know, the flowers that are reminiscent of four loudspeakers on a pole. A few years ago one of them tried to flower in its cardboard box, so now we have a sort of 'amaryllis patrol' before Christmas to make sure they don't stay wrapped longer than necessary.

One bulb that we received as a present last Christmas came already planted in its compost, it really was a case of 'simply add water'. It grew and it grew, and I put it by the lectern in the chapel. I couldn't remember what colour it was going to be, and, as I had discarded the box, that added to the interest in watching it develop. It acquired a group of admirers who, for several weeks, gathered at the lectern after Sunday Mass to have a closer look, 'Friends of the Turvey Abbey Amaryllis'? Finally the huge pink and white flowers opened, and it reached its best just in time to be displaced from centre stage by the start of Lent.

If you buy an amaryllis bulb you expect it to flower, you'd probably complain at the shop if it didn't, but how amazing when you think of it, all those flowers out of that uninteresting-looking bulb. If you didn't know that was going to happen, you wouldn't half be surprised.

I don't know of any references to bulbs in the Bible, other than the leeks, onions and garlic that the people of Israel had acquired a taste for in Egypt (Numbers Ch11 v5), but there are plenty of references to seeds.

In John's gospel, in reply to a request, Jesus talks of the death of a wheat grain: if it doesn't die it remains a single grain, if it does die, it yields a rich harvest. (John Ch12 v24). Like the wheat grain, Jesus will himself die—and by his death and resurrection will bring about the salvation of the whole of creation.

At the Office of Readings we sing a hymn which compares the hidden growth of a seed with Jesus working unseen but powerfully in our world, it was written by one of our community:



In the darkness sleeps the seed
planted by the Lord
Day and night its roots grow deep
Feeding on his word

In the silence swells the seed,
Forming blade and ear;
Though we neither see nor grasp,
Harvest-time is near.

Living waters, Lord, you set
In the heavy earth:
By your word within, without,
Call your Church to birth.

Believers may sometimes feel that nothing is ever going to happen despite their prayers and fidelity, but we won't half be surprised when it does!