

Link to Liturgy



Rich Soil

15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Lessons and Discussions

Page 5 – Poor Soil Part I

“some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up”

Page 8 – Poor Soil Part II

“when the sun rose it was scorched... and the thorns grew up and choked it”

Page 11 – Rich Soil

“But some seed fell on rich soil”

Page 14 – Purpose of Parables

“he spoke to them at length in parables”

Link to Liturgy provides faithful resources which use the latest audiovisual means alongside traditional means to evangelize & catechize thus linking life to the Gospel & the Gospel to life. Sign up Free to Link to Liturgy.



Entrance Antiphon - Simple English Propers

This should be chanted so that the time of prayer, study and discussion can be made sacred. Another song can be substituted, but should have the same theme.

*Ego autem cum iustitia**Ps 17 (16): 15*

I
AS for me, * I will appear before you in right-
 eousness; I will be satisfied when your glory is made
 manifest.

Source - ccwatershed.org

Alternate options:

At the Name of Jesus

God's Blessing Sends Us Forth

I Sing the Mighty Power of God

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Praise to the Holiest in the Height

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

Praise Songs

Open the Eyes of My Heart (Paul Baloche)

Prepare the Way (Charlie Hall)

Life is Not (Remnant)

Remnant

Limitless (Remnant)

Big Gulp (Remnant)

Infinity and Beyond (Remnant)

Question Mark (Remnant)

Collect – Roman Missal

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

“The End” Notes

- [1] Baltimore Catechism No. 2; Question 182
- [2] Psalm 95
- [3] Canticle of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36:24-28) Saturday Morning Prayer, Week IV, Liturgy of the Hours
- [4] Sermon for Sexagesima Sunday: Calls to Grace
- [5] St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on St. Matthew's Gospel, 44, 3
- [6] Revelation 3:16
- [7] Fr. John Hardon
- [8] Ephesians 2:8-10
- [9] Archbishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy
- [10] William Barclay
- [11] Order of the Mass; Liturgy of the Eucharist; Preparation of the altar and the gifts
- [12] Isaiah 53:7
- [13] Philippians 2:8
- [14] Roman Catholic Daily Missal [1962]; page 1837
- [15] Canticle of Zachariah (Luke 18-79) – Morning Prayer; Liturgy of the Hours
- [16] In Conversation with God 4, 19.2
- [17] Pope Saint Gregory the Great
- [18] Psalm 23; Office of Readings (Corpus Christi)
- [19] Spiritual Canticle, 3,1
- [20] Gospel in this Link to Liturgy packet
- [21] In Conversation with God 4, 19.2
- [22] St. John of the Cross, The Ascent of Mount Carmel, 3,18,1
- [23] Source: QuoteCatholic.com
- [24] 1 Corinthians 15:20-23
- [25] FrassatiUSA
- [26] Cf. Psalm 24:3
- [27] Matthew 5:45
- [28] In Conversation with God 4, 19.3
- [29] St. John Chrysostom, loc cit
- [30] Luke 18:19
- [31] Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska; Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul; page 1578
- [32] Jeremiah 15:16 (Reading; Monday, Morning Prayer, Week II; Liturgy of the Hours)
- [33] Gospel in this Link to Liturgy Packet
- [34] J. Escriva, The Forge, 385
- [35] Dodd, *Parables*, 5
- [36] Pope Benedict XVI; Jesus of Nazareth; page 192-193
- [37] Matthew footnotes 13, 11
- [38] Matthew 13:14-15
- [39] Pope Benedict XVI; Jesus of Nazareth; page 189-191
- [40] Psalm 115; Sunday, Evening Prayer II; Week II; Liturgy of the Hours
- [41] Roman Catholic Daily Missal [1962]; page 1838
- [42] John 6:68
- [43] Matthew 13:18-19
- [44] Matthew footnote 13, 3-8

O God, who show the light of your truth to those who go astray, so that they may return to the right path, give all who for the faith they possess are accounted Christians the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the name of Christ and to strive after all that does it honor. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Gospel Reading – Matthew 13:1-23 – Roman Missal

NOTE: *In the Roman Catholic Tridentine Lectionary this Gospel is not read.*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
- Glory to you O Lord

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear.” The disciples approached him and said, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” He said to them in reply, “Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand. Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: You shall indeed hear but not understand, you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear

with their ears and understand with their hearts and be converted, and I heal them.

“But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. “Hear then the parable of the sower. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

- Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings – 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

From the beginning of the treatise On the Mysteries by Saint Ambrose, bishop

Open then you ears. Enjoy the fragrance of eternal life, breathed on you by means of the sacraments. We explained this to you as we celebrated the mystery of “the opening” when we said: Effetha, that is, be opened. Everyone who was to come for the grace of baptism had to understand what he was to be asked, and must remember what he was to answer. This mystery was celebrated by Christ when he healed the man who was deaf and dumb, in the Gospel which we proclaimed to you.

After this, the holy of holies was opened up for you; you entered into the sacred place of regeneration. Recall what you were asked; remember what you answered. You renounced the devil and his works, the world and its dissipation and sensuality. Your words are recorded, not on a monument to the dead but in the book of the living...You entered to confront your enemy, for you intended to renounce him to his face. You turned toward the

praeparasti, da, ut cuius commemoratione laetamur; eius pia intercessione, ab instantibus malis et a morte perpetua liberemur. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Slave Regina (English Translation)

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee to we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God, Who by the working of the Holy Spirit didst prepare both body and soul of the glorious Virgin Mother, Mary, that she might deserve to be made a worthy dwelling for Thy Son, grant that we who rejoice in her memory, may, by her loving intercession, be delivered from present evils and from lasting death, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Marian Antiphon – Salve Regina

V
S Alve Re-gi-na, * ma-ter mi-se-ri-córdi-æ, Vi-ta, dul-
cé-do, et spes nostra, salve. Ad te clamá-mus, éxsu-
les, fí-li- i Hevæ. Ad te suspi-rá-mus, geméntes et flen-
tes in hac lacrimá-rum valle. E-ia ergo, Advo-cá-ta
nostra, illos tu- os mi-se-ri-córdes ó-cu-los ad nos con-
vér-te. Et Je-sum, be-ne-díctum fructum ventris tu- i,
no-bis post hoc exsí-li- um osténde. O cle- mens:
O pi- a: O dulcis Virgo Ma-rí- a.

V. Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genitrix.
R. Ut digni efficamur promissionibus Christi.

Oremus. Omnipotens sempiternus Deus, qui gloriosae Virginis Matris Mariae corpus et animam, ut dignum Filii tui habitaculum effici mereretur, Spiritu Sancto cooperante,

east, for one who renounces the devil turns toward Christ and fixes his gaze directly on him.

Responsory – Office of Readings – 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

We were once foolish, disobedient and misled. We then lived in malice and envy. Hateful ourselves, we hated one another.

– Because of his mercy, God has saved us through the baptism of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

All our lives were once ruled by physical desires, and by nature we deserved God’s anger.

– Because of his mercy, God has saved us through the baptism of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Poor soil – Part I – Lesson and Discussion

“some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up”

The Gospel reading for this weekend’s Mass is a well known parable. This parable relates to everyone then as it does to us today. Jesus uses a common scenario for the people back then, a sower planting seed in his field. Even if the majority of us do not farm, we all know the importance of planting, seeding, watching and waiting for plants and crops to grow.

Jesus starts with three types of bad soil that cannot support long-term growth. We will take a look at each of them individually. The first type of soil (the path) is discussed in Part I, the second two types (shallow, rocky soil and soil with thorns) are discussed in Part II. With this parable, Jesus challenges each of us to examine our own conscience to find what soil we are.

It is good to always evaluate ourselves to find out what soil we are and one way we do this is through Counsel, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit. **Why do we receive the gift of Counsel?** “We receive the gift of Counsel to warn us of the deceits of the devil, and of the dangers to salvation.”[1] In the Gospel, Jesus warns us of the dangers to salvation by giving us the three types of soil that fail to produce fruit. We can ask the Holy Spirit for the gift

of Counsel and then look into our life and honestly ask the following: **What causes us to have a hard heart? What people, places, events, attitudes steal grace from us? Keep us from growing deep roots and choke out the life of Christ in us?**

Of the four spots the seeds have fallen, the path is probably the worst of all places. **Why?** The main reason is the seed never has a chance to grow. This represents the hearts of people who completely reject God and their hearts are as hard as stone. God has always warned His people not to have “hard hearts,” and this reminder is prayed each morning in the Invitatory Psalm of the Liturgy of the Hours . “Today, listen to the voice of the Lord: Do not grow stubborn, as your fathers did in the wilderness, when at Meriba and Massah they challenged me and provoked me, Although they has seen all of my works.”[2]

God’s promise is to “give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts.”[3] As Christians, we must live this promise and guard against returning to the stony hearts we once had and could have if we reject God and His promise. It is possible that those with stony hearts hear God’s word, but it goes in one ear and out the other. The bird that swoops down and catches it is like Satan who quickly takes away any seeds of faith which are sowed and tries to remove them, not giving them a change to germinate. As Cardinal John Henry Newman once said about Satan, “He [Satan] is not idle; rather, he has his eyes always wide and open and is always ready to spring and snatch away the gift that you do not use.”[4] Satan is like a vulture, ready and willing to swoop down and grab anything that is dying or dead in our souls. He is also eager to remove any sign of hope or source of life within our reach.

What is a person like whose seed fell in this kind of soul?

“They are lukewarm and full of scorn.”[5] We know Jesus spits out those who are lukewarm,[6] he wants us to be on fire for God and following the path of perfection. The only way to make this happen is to keep an open heart and to not be harsh.

How can we keep from letting this happen? We must ask for the Holy Spirit to empower us with the gift of Fortitude so we do not fall into lukewarmness and negligence. “The gift of Fortitude is a supernatural inclination which enables the will to do great things for God with joy, without fear and in spite of all obstacles.”[7] We must be driven and have the resolve to remove

This prayer is found on page 23 of the Oratory: Place of Prayer Book. To purchase the Oratory: Place of Prayer Book - <http://remnantband.bandcamp.com/merc>

O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins, and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the holy catholic Church teaches, because in revealing them you can neither deceive nor be deceived. Amen.

What does the seed represent? “Hear then the parable of the sower. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom...”[43] We can easily take for granted our faith, and the word of Christ. We must be willing to be the mouthpiece for Christ, and to not be afraid to be the missionaries of the twenty-first century. To tell our family, our friends, our neighbors of Jesus Christ, His Church, and He is been calling each and every one of us from the time we were born to today and at our last breath. We must be willing to do this time and time again, not grow weary even when we find people with a harden heart and the seeds get swept away, but keep laying seeds until the ground is fruitful to flourish. Because as one of the footnotes to this passage says, “...in spite of some failure because of opposition and indifference, the message of Jesus about the coming of the kingdom will have enormous success.”[44] May we stay close to him and always look to hear, understand it, and bear fruit that yields a hundred fold.

Profession of Faith or Popular Devotion – Christ has No Body now

Saint Teresa of Avila wrote this prayer, which challenges us to be completely open to the Word of God. We must not be like those in the Gospel that “hear but not understand” and “look but never see”. Our ears, eyes, heart and our whole body must change so much that our body unites with the Body of Christ the Church so that Christ can work through us.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
no hands but yours,
no feet but yours,
yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion
is to look out to the earth,
yours are the feet by which He is to go about doing good
and yours are the hands by which He is to bless us now.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

Oratory: Place of Prayer – Act of Faith

any sins, especially habitual and mortal sins, out of our lives. At the same time, we must always have a contrite and penitent heart. We must remind ourselves of the necessity of God’s Grace, our Faith in Him and the law of Charity. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast. For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.”[8] If we have already received the Sacrament of Confirmation, we can thank God for the Grace that He bestowed on us and continue to ask for His Grace. Through the gift of Confirmation, God sends an outpouring of the Holy Spirit into our hearts in order to make them soft. If we have not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation, we can prepare with great longing for that gift. There is no way for us to obtain salvation except through our Lord Jesus Christ who has planted the seeds within all of our hearts. The seed which He plants is Himself. A seed that not only softens the heart of man but gives man a new heart, the heart of Christ. “Let there be a bonding with Jesus Christ so close that there is only one heart with him...”[9]

How does meekness and humility help us to not have hard hearts? In Middle English, the origin of meekness means “soft” and the Greek origin it means “discipline.” It is only through meekness, that our hearts can be soft and receptive to the Word of God. We must be like “an animal which has been domesticated, which has been trained to obey the word of command, which has learned to answer to the reins. It [meekness] is the word for an animal which has learned to accept control.”[10] Meekness makes our hearts soft and disciplined and leads to humility. We are soft like soil and disciplined like a domesticated animal. We imitate Jesus, “who humbled himself to share in our humanity”[11] and was “like a lamb led to the slaughter”[12] as he “humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.”[13]

VIDEO - Baseball Gloves & Skills : How to Oil a Baseball Glove

POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 1:31

<http://youtu.be/fgs9reQHNZ>

There are many things in life that must be prepared and softened to be made ready for use. For example, a baseball glove is hard and stiff at first and cannot be useful in catching a ball. It takes time and energy to apply the oil to the glove and let the

oil sink in. The oil is applied mostly to the area of the glove that will receive the ball. At both our baptism and Confirmation (and then also at Holy Orders for those ordained), the Chrism Oil is applied to our body and sinks into the soul, which will be the area receptive to the Word of God. During the Rite of Baptism the priest touches the ears and says, “Ephpheta, which means, ‘Be opened.’”[14] It is the Sacred Oil that helps our ears to open to the word of God throughout our life. From the beginning of time, God was preparing the world to be open to the Word made Flesh, Jesus Christ. This is most evident in the life of Saint John the Baptist, who had the mission to “go before the Lord to prepare his way.”[15] At the very beginning of our life, God prepares us to receive the Lord by oiling us and opening our ears. Openness is attentiveness; we must be attentive to the voice of God, to the life of Christ and to the activity of the Holy Spirit. In the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, the phrase “Let us be attentive” is used eight times.

Poor soil – Part II - Lesson and Discussion

“when the sun rose it was scorched... and the thorns grew up and choked it”

Jesus speaks about the heat of the sun, and that the seeds were scorched by the sun. Being scorched by the sun is something we see in writing for thousands of years. Even in Greek mythology, we read the story of Daedalus and Icarus, a father and son who attempt to escape a prison in Crete by making wings with which they planned to fly over the ocean. When they take off, Daedalus’ son, Icarus flies too close to the sun, which melts the wax and causes him to fall into the ocean. The sun in this parable deals with the sin in the world that can burn and sting us.

What did Jesus mean by “scorched by the sun”? If anyone has ever been sunburned, they know the sun can be a powerful thing. We have to have some protection from the heat of the sun. The enemies of our soul are the devil, the world and the flesh. If we stay too long in conversation with any of the three we will get burned. We must have protection against these enemies. Our protection is our faith in Jesus Christ. It is only through strong roots in Christ that we can endure when Satan comes after us as strong as the summer sun or as powerful as a hurricane. We must have the strength and “holy stubbornness”[16] to survive.

The second analogy Jesus uses is probably the most dangerous and scariest for most people. **Why is that?** We have faith in God

God. When our ears are “heavy” with all the noise of the world, we cannot hear the word of God. When our eyes are focused on the darkness of the world, they will quickly “shut” when in the presence of the brilliant light of Christ. We, like the pagans, can become what we worship. “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths but they cannot speak; they have eyes but they cannot see; they have ears but they cannot hear; they have nostrils but they cannot smell. With their hands they cannot feel; with their feet they cannot walk. No sound comes from their throats. Their makers will come to be like them and so will all who trust in them.”[40] If we worship the world our hearts, ears and eyes will not work, this disability will extend to our whole life. Our mouths won’t speak the word of God and we will therefore not live out our Baptismal promise to be a prophet. Our nostrils will not “perceive the fragrance of God’s sweetness.”[41] Our hands will not feel the grasp of God, who walks hand and hand with us, now will our feet walk the path of perfection. We will become what we worship and will not understand the disability that has overcome us.

MUSIC VIDEO - Brandon Heath - Give Me Your Eyes - POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 4:03

<http://youtu.be/P5AkNqLuVg>

Why can the disciples only truly hear Jesus? We are called by our Baptism to be united with Christ. We are like the disciples because we heard the call of Jesus Christ. We should not ever take this for granted. Even though we may hear and see it with our own eyes, we must also follow His will. We see it with the disciples when they ran away from His side when Jesus was put through His Passion and death. Just because God has given us the grace to hear and understand is only part of the gift. The other gift is to act upon what He teaches. We do this by keeping our heart open to Him so that we can have bear great fruit within and out of us a hundred fold.

Why does Jesus still speak to them even if the people don’t understand? As mentioned in an early lesson, God’s grace and mercy is extended upon everyone. He does not hold anything back, and will rain His mercy on those who deserve it and those who do not. We should feel humbled and blessed when we do hear and accept His words, and come to the realization that Saint Peter did, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”[42]

these words, Jesus places himself in the line of the Prophets – his destiny is a prophet’s destiny. Isaiah’s words taken overall are much more severe and terrifying than the extract that Jesus cites. In the Book of Isaiah it says: ‘Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed’ (Is 6:10). Prophets fail: Their message goes too much against general opinion and the comfortable habits of life. It is only through failure that their word becomes efficacious. ...And here, unexpectedly, we see a connection with the parable of the sower...It is striking what a significant role the image of the seed plays in the whole of Jesus’ message. The time of Jesus, the time of the disciples, is the time of sowing and of the seed. The ‘Kingdom of God’ is present in seed form. Observed from the outside, the seed is something minuscule. It is easy to overlook. The mustard seed – an image of the Kingdom of God – is the smallest of seeds, yet it bears a whole tree within it. The seed is the present of what is to come in the future. In the seed, that which is to come is already here in a hidden way. It is the presence of a promise. On Palm Sunday, the Lord summarized the manifold seed parables and unveiled their full meaning: ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit’ (Jn 12:24). He himself is the grain of wheat. His ‘failure’ on the Cross is exactly the way leading from the few to the many, to all: ‘And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself’ (Jn. 12:32). The failure of the Prophets, his failure, appears now in another light. It is precisely the way to reach the point where ‘they turn and God will forgive them.’ It is on the Cross that the parables are unlocked. In his Farewell Discourses, the Lord says, apropos of this: ‘I have said this to you in parables; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in parables but tell you plainly of the Father’ (Jn. 16:25). The parables speak in a hidden way, then, of the mystery of the Cross; they do not only speak of it – they are part of it themselves. For precisely because they allow the mystery of Jesus’ divinity to be seen, they lead to contradiction. It is just when they emerge into final clarity, as in the parable of the unjust vintners (cf. Mk 12:1-12), that they become stations on the way to the Cross. In the parables, Jesus is not only the sower who scatters the seed of God’s word, but also the seed that falls into the earth in order to die and so to bear fruit.”[39]

What could cause us not to understand? When our hearts are “fat” with the things of this world, the heart cannot be open to

and at some times in our life, we have been ignited by our faith, which was sparked at our Baptism. However, with time and tribulations we can see the faith of so many of our brothers and sisters in Christ fall by the way side. What was once a beautiful flower could easily wither and die. Saint Gregory the Great says that there are three states in the life of the Christian. “There are in truth three states of the converted: the beginning, the middle, and the perfection. In the beginning, they experience the charms of sweetness; in the middle, the contests of temptation; and in the end, the fullness of perfection.”[17] Often we see ourselves and others getting to the middle stage and giving up. We prefer to stay in the beginning, but God wills to move our soul to perfection.

What are some charms of sweetness that we can experience in the Christian life? What are the contests of temptation that we experience? Which of these cause us to give up our Christian life at times?

Why would someone have strong faith one minute and then lose it the next? If someone could have a faith that comes and goes that easily, the depth of their faith must be shallow. This also indicates that their faith is not as mature and thorough as it should be. People may be willing and wanting to grow, yet choose not to leave their old way of life. Take for example the gardener whose plants may grow well for a short time. The plant must have the right amount of room to grow deep roots so that they can receive all the nutrients needed, and it cannot be uprooted so easily. Many times the gardener will have to place the plant in a new planter or pot so that it can continue to grow. God must uproot us in our life so that we can continue to grow, this uprooting can be uncomfortable. We do not want to be uprooted, so in our pride we stay in the old planter and spiritually die.

How can we keep from growing fast and then withering away? We first must be willing to keep growing. If we are willing, the next step is to realize that we have to grow with our faith. When a runner is training for a marathon, he does not stay at a low mileage for his long run. He continues to increase the mileage little by little every week. It can be painful at first, but the body adjusts and is able to handle the long distance. Soon the body can go the twenty-six miles. If the runner were to stop running, their running base would collapse and they would have to start from square one. Another way to think of our faith is to

consider the hermit crab. When a hermit crab is growing it looks for a new larger shell to live in. It cannot live in the same little shell from the beginning. We can also think of faith as a cup, as our faith begins to grow we want to put more in it. The cup is faith and what is placed in it is Grace. May our faith ever increase and thus we may be full of the abundant graces God lavishes upon us.

Where is the cup of faith most filled with Grace? At the Mass, especially at the altar we can say, “You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes. My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing.”[18] In this short sentence, the Sacraments of Initiation are stressed. At Baptism and Confirmation we are anointed with oil and in the Eucharist a banquet is prepared for us. When we live the Sacramental life, which is the life of Faith, we fill our cup (body and soul) with Grace.

If you only experience God’s love once and not do anything to let it grow, then it will die off or wither away at the slightest problems. Many people say, “I’m a spiritual person.” However, if that person is not making efforts to grow in holiness then their spirituality will be compromised and will die. Saint John of the Cross said, “the soul that truly loves God never allows laziness to prevent it from doing everything in its power to find the love of God, its Beloved. And after having done all it can it is still not satisfied and considers it has done nothing.”[19]

How does our faith get choked out? As Christ taught, these are the people who hear the word, but “worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit.”[20] The deadly sin of the love for power and riches is greed. This disorder for the desire to gain power and excessive wealth suffocates and deafens us. If we seek only the things that are of this world, that is as far as we can grow, and the growth has a limit. If we set our eyes and our will to God there is no limit because there is no limit to God. It is nearly impossible for anyone to think by “owning more and more possessions, and by the constant determination to seek out what is most comfortable, not to fall into other sins.”[21]

Why did our Lord use “thorns” in the parable? “This is why Our Lord called them ‘thorns’ in the Gospel, so that we should understand that anyone who fondly caresses such things with

element that would have confused the crowd would have been the seed that fell on rich soil and produced thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold. That is unusual because seed does not produce that much even if it is planted in the richest soil, that is not natural.

How can we better understand parables? In a way parables are allegorical and so we can take each component or character and identify them. Who is the sower? What is the seed? What does each soil represent? We must remember that it is not like science in which there is a set code, a parable is about conversion and can be read on different levels. For example Jesus is the sower, because He speaks the Word, which is the seed, but Jesus is also the seed, which is the Word and must like a grain of wheat be crushed in order to bear fruit. It can sometimes be helpful to make a connection to our modern culture and life so that we can reflect on what Christ is teaching us.

Why did Jesus speak in parables? Jesus spoke in figurative speech because it demanded reflection and understanding on the part of the listener. If the person who hears Jesus does not want to think then they can just easily discard His words like the seeds fallen on the rocky ground that would be trampled on. “Through everyday events, he [Jesus] wants to show us the real ground of all things and thus the true direction we have to take in our day-to-day lives if we want to go the right way. He shows us God: not an abstract God, but the God who acts, who intervenes in our lives, and wants to take us by the hand. He shows us through everyday things who we are and what we must therefore do. He conveys knowledge that makes demands upon us; it not only or even primarily adds to what we know, but it changes our lives.”[36]

Why can’t the other people understand? “To understand is a gift of God, granted to the disciples but not to the crowds.”[37] It is also to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah, which says: “You shall indeed hear but not understand, you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and be converted and I heal them”[38] “If we want to understand the Lord’s mysterious words, we must read them in light of Isaiah, whom he cites, and we must read them in light of his own path, the outcome of which he already knows. In saying

Are we watering the soil by our tears in the Sacrament of Reconciliation to help keep our soil fresh? To be the best soil are we constantly striving to be the best and suitable soil for our Lord? Do we take time everyday to make our soil deeper and richer by prayer and study of our faith? Are we generous with our fruit that God has born within us to others?

We can be good soil by not just being okay with receiving the Word of God, but by wanting to devour the seed. “When I found your words, I devoured them; they became my joy and the happiness of my heart, because I bore your name, O Lord, God of hosts.”[32] Only through the openness of seeking and devouring the word of God will we have joy and happiness in our hearts, it is then that our heart will be like the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This heart which is meek, humble and one with Jesus is in sharp contrast to what Jesus describes in the Gospel “gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes.”[33]

“We can never be content with what we are doing to serve our God, just as an artist is never satisfied with the painting or statue he is working on. Everyone tells him how marvelous it is, but he thinks: ‘No. It isn’t quite right. I wanted it to be better.’ This is how we should feel. Moreover, the Lord has given us so much. He has a right to the very best from us - and we must go at his pace.”[34] Let us not fall behind in bearing His good fruit.

Purpose of Parables – Lesson and Discussion

“he spoke to them at length in parables”

In today’s Gospel, someone may hear the extended version (Matthew 13:1-23) or they may hear the shortened version (Matthew 13:1-9). If we only hear the shorten version we miss out on when Jesus explains the reason He speaks in parables and the explanation specifically for today’s parable on the seeds.

What is a parable? “At its simplest the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.”[35] Jesus spoke in parable for people to better understand a concept in terms they could comprehend. However, he includes an element in parables that does not make sense and causes the listener to wonder. In Palestine at that time, sowing often preceded plowing where some seed is scattered on ground that is unsuitable. In this parable, the

his will, will be wounded by some sin.”[22] The thorns represent not God’s will for us but our own personal will which can be seduced by Satan.

Rich Soil – Lesson and Discussion

“But some seed fell on rich soil”

The last description Jesus gives is obviously the soil we all hope to be.

What does it mean to have “good soil”? The three cardinal virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity are at the foundation of what God wants from us. If we are generous with God, especially in these three key areas, the more fruit we will bear and the better fruit that fruit will be. The best fruit comes from the best soil. Some food and drink and even items like cigars can only be grown in a certain type of soil. This soil is good and necessary the items grown in the soil cannot be replicated in any other soil. Only the soul planted in the rich soil of Christ can reach perfection. The soil of Christ cannot be replicated.

The best fruit takes time and energy. If we want to have faith like the Saints, it will take time and that time starts now. It took every moment of their lives to achieve such holiness, so we too must be patient and diligent if we want to bear the same good fruit. It has been said that the reason why the Church is full of old people praying is because it took them that long to figure it out. We don’t want to wait that long. We strive to become Saints now and can share in the attitude of Saint John Berchmans who said, “If I do not become a saint when I am young, I shall never become one.”[23] Our bodily resurrection will be the ultimate fruit. Saint Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the first fruit. Let us then imitate this first fruit so that we might share in His glory. “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each on in proper order: Christ the firstfruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ.”[24] Do we belong to Christ? This is an important question for each of us to ask ourselves each day. The seed planted in the soil of Christ will rise in the bodily resurrection, the seed planted in sin will not rise but rather decay and fall.

MUSIC - Chris Tomlin - Awake My Soul (with Lecrae) - POP

CULTURE CONNECTION – 3:55

<http://youtu.be/fWpvknKuYr>

The psalmist says “Awake, my soul”. Let us bury our soul in Christ so that once hidden in Christ, our soul will rise. Let us ask the intercession of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati who said, “The higher we go, the better we shall hear the voice of Christ.” We can pray, “Heavenly Father, Give me the courage to strive for the highest goals, to flee every temptation to be mediocre. Enable me to aspire to greatness, as Pier Giorgio did, and to open my heart with joy to Your call of holiness. Free me from the fear of failure. I want to be, Lord, firmly and forever united to You. Grant me the graces I ask You through Pier Giorgio’s intercession, by the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”[25] Pier Giorgio’s motto is “verso l’alto” which means, “to the top.” May our soul awake and may we “climb the mountain of the Lord.”[26]

Can I change from one soil to the other? Absolutely! In our journey of life there will be feast and famine. There will be times we can see ourselves in each of these three scenarios. However, the main point to see is that the seed fell on four types of terrain or soil. God’s love and grace falls on each of us, “for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.”[27] God’s mercy and the free will that He has given, allow us to change soils and see the Grace of God grow within us. “There is no soil that is too impervious or too uncultivated for him, so long as it is prepared to change and to respond to him.”[28]

Is our goal just to be good soil? Likewise, if we all are found to be good soil, there can be variant degrees of fruit that comes from each ground. **How does one bring about a hundredfold, another sixty fold and another thirty fold if the seeds are all the same?** St. John Chrysostom explains it best when he said, “We can see that the difference depends on the person receiving it, for even where the soil is good there is a great deal of difference between one patch of ground and another. We can see that neither the farmer [God] nor the seed [His grace] is at fault, but the soil [us] on which the sowing was done. This is not a result of nature, but of disposition of the will.”[29] We must be willing and strive to produce the most and the best for God. We should strive not to be just good soil, but the best soil! It is not good enough to say, “I am a Christian or I am in the Church.” If we just want to be in the right place to play it safe, we will probably only produce thirty fold. If our goal is holiness and to

please God, giving Him honor and glory through the Grace of God we will produce sixty or a hundredfold. It also can be very easy to settle for less if we say, “Well at least, I am not bad soil” or “At least I am not producing thirty fold.” We strive for the best soil and the best production in that soil.

TV SHOW – NCIS When your good isn't good enough - POP CULTURE CONNECTION - 2:50

http://youtu.be/_LHQgKoiV

This song and video have it right. **What do you do when your good isn't good enough? Who holds the standard of what is “good”?** Neither our friends, teachers, bosses, parents, nor do we ourselves determine what is “good.” If we allow “good” to be determined by anyone other than God, the good will truly not be good enough. Jesus stresses that goodness resides in God when he asked the rich young ruler, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.”[30] Our good is never good enough. When “our good” is not good enough, then we realize that we must strive for God, who is good, and the standard of goodness. Only God’s good is good enough. Our good might not even get us to be good soil. If we strive for God’s good always and never settle for anything less, we will not only be good soil but will produce hundredfold.

How can I be good soil? We have to be open to God’s grace at all time. If our openness to God’s grace and faith in Him is only the size of a Dixie cup, then that is all He will put in us because that is all we can handle. If we have the size of a double Big Gulp, then we can obtain more graces and have a much deeper faith in God. Jesus made this point to Saint Faustina when He said, “I desire that these souls distinguish themselves by boundless trust in My mercy. I myself will attend to the sanctification of such souls. I will provide them with everything they will need to attain sanctity. The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only – and that is – trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive. Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of My graces into them. I rejoice that they ask for much, because it is my desire to give much, very much. On the other hand, I am sad when souls ask for little, when they narrow their hearts.”[31]

When a farmer is getting ready to plant any seeds, they make sure to remove anything in the soil that does not belong. **Are we trying to get rid of anything that is not good for our soil?**