

## **15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ord. Time -- July 11-12, 2020**

In today's Gospel, we hear about a large crowd that had gathered to listen to Jesus. They are obviously attracted to him and are eagerly listening to his teachings, but what will they do about what he has taught them? To motivate them to reflect more deeply upon his teaching and then act upon it, Jesus tells them a story – parable. --- A farmer went out to sow seed – scattering the seed everywhere. As the crowd hears this they certainly would have had questions about what will happen to the seed as it lands in the different places and would have wondered why the sower was not more careful about where the seed landed. And so begins this parable about what happened to the seed and the invitation to the crowd and us to reflect upon how we receive and respond to the seed of God's word that falls upon us in our life.

Two weeks ago, myself and another friend journeyed to California to bring our priest friend there to begin a year of discernment about joining a religious community there, and then the two of us returned home by way of train. Along the way there and back there were many wonderful conversations between us and with many people we met along the journey. Many spiritual insights were shared along the way. But what is going to happen now with all the seeds of God's word and grace that fell upon us during this trip?

That is the question in today's readings for all of us.

How are we receiving and acting upon the living and saving Word of God sowed by God in our life? And, how are we in turn sowing that living and powerful Word of God in the world as we go about our life?

In today's Gospel Jesus goes into great detail in explaining the parable of the sower to his disciples. So this is actually very good timing for me coming back from vacation as Jesus pretty much give us a homily in the Gospel so I really do not need to add much more.

However, it is important that we see the larger picture and goal of what Jesus is trying to teach us.

In today's parable Jesus wants to introduce his mission to us. Earlier in his Gospel, Matthew wrote that: "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom." Jesus sees himself as the one who was sent to "preach the gospel of the Kingdom." When Jesus begins his public ministry, he refers to a text from the prophet Isaiah that says: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor," and then announces that these prophetic words have come true in Him. As the sower goes out to plant the seed, so Jesus goes out from his home in Nazareth to sow in all people the good news that God saves humanity.

Pope Francis calls us to take inspiration from the Sower, Jesus, who, without giving in to weariness, runs through the field of the world spreading his saving word in all places – even those most hostile to him. We might think that he is too reckless in this sowing and that it is too random. However, this manner of sowing is the teaching of Jesus on the way to be missionaries. Mission is not for a select time and place. Mission is about spreading a word full of the Presence of God that leads every single human being to daily ask the questions: "Who am I?", "Where do I come from?" and especially, "Where am I going and why?"

The sower Jesus plants the seed everywhere, (it seems like even wasting it), not disregarding any type of soil but considering each one worthy of trust and attention.

This is the vocation of all Christians. We are all sowers of the Word, from the Pope on down to the last person baptized. Not all of us are sowers to the same degree and with the same responsibilities, but we are all responsible to bring the Word of God to the world without being discouraged if some seed seems to fall on bad ground. It is true that there are many failures, but it is also certain, as Jesus tells us, that somewhere there is success. And in this good soil it will yield amazing results. It is a lesson in trust.

God will not limit where the seed where the seed goes. Everyone gets a chance to receive God grace, no

matter what obstacles may be in the way. God's wild extravagance gives goodness a chance to bloom in unexpected and unlikely places, allowing it to bear fruit beyond expectation. There are many obstacles to the growth of faith. Faith is not just a matter of intellectually accepting certain truths of faith but of entrusting ourselves freely to God. It will always be a struggle to some degree in us and in others but it will lead to the fullness of life. Jesus is calling us to life.

St. Paul in today's second reading speaks about those who have the first fruits of the Spirit but yet long for greater fulfillment. A true life of faith that not only hears but takes in the word of God produces the fruit of the Spirit. When the seeds of the Kingdom are planted in a person's heart, the Holy Spirit causes this fruit to grow – namely: love, joy, peace patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are the character traits of a person who accepts the Word of God, which lead that person to participate in works of mercy, peace and justice, not to mention the work of spreading more seeds.

With Jesus, let us carry out our vocation as sowers, throwing into the world the Word that **alone** gives life. Although we, along with the rest of humanity find it difficult at times to recognize our need for God, there is in each of us a need for life, consolation and hope – that only God can give.

The sowing of Christ, and ours with Him, is to put the divine seed of life in the heart of every person, increasing the awareness in all that God lives and wants us to live. God is glorified when persons live. "I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." That is why Jesus sows life in us and calls us to do the same for our brothers and sisters.

Let us sow the seed of this word of life which will not return to the Lord void, but will accomplish God's will and achieve the end for which He has sent it. Let us strive to be fertile ground for God's living and transformative word as often as possible.