

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time: Be Good Soil

Today's Gospel reading contains the Parable of the Sower. I have a story I like to tell in my wedding homilies that perhaps you have heard. It's great for weddings, but it also really fits today's readings.

The story is the story of the fussy vegetarian. A young woman was committed to being a vegetarian, but she was never satisfied with any of the fruit or vegetables she bought. For her, all melons were too ripe, or not ripe enough. In her eyes, she could never find tomatoes that weren't bruised. Heads of cauliflower and broccoli were too big or too little. She was never happy.

Then one day, driving down Land o Lakes Blvd, she drove past a new store with a long line of people waiting to get in. She looked, and the sign said, God's Fruit and Vegetable Stand. "Finally," she said, "I can get some decent vegetables and fruit." So she stood on line and waited. Hours went by before she walked into that door. She was enveloped in light, but she didn't see any apples or oranges or tomatoes or cabbage, or anything to buy. She walked to the light, and there was a counter there. And behind the counter, there stood God. She could tell it was God because of the light, (and because he had an apron on with a big G on it.) Anyway, she placed her order, "I would like some perfect broccoli, and some perfect carrots, some perfect tomatoes and a perfect melon. Also, if you have perfect Brussel sprouts, that would really be a miracle."

"Sorry," God said, "I only sell seeds here."

Actually, God doesn't sell seeds, He gives seeds to us. The seeds are his Word in its many expressions. But we have to do something with this gift. It simply is not enough just to hear the Word of God. We have to let it grow within us to such an extent that we are covered in its foliage. It is simply not enough to go to Church. We have to be Church. It is not enough to read the Bible. We have to be People of the Word.

The Divine Sower is throwing seed. And not a few seeds. He is throwing out big huge handfuls. He is pouring out his Word upon us. We've got to do something more than just let the seed hit the ground. We've got to be good soil. We have to nourish the Word of God. We have to strengthen it. We have to let it take root and grow.

So we hear the words: Love one another. That's nice. And useless. Useless unless we are able to look at that person in our family whose life has become the bane of our existence and make up our minds that we are going to love that person. This means that we will take it upon ourselves to end the vicious cycle of sarcasm, of silence, of nastiness, and maybe even of hatred. Let the Word of God take root and grow. We need to pray for that father who avoids us, and look for ways that he might enjoy our presence. We need to pray for the mother who snaps at us, and find a way

to ease her burdens and fears. It may be something as simple as making dinner. We need to pray for that child or Teen who is both hurting and hurtful. We have to refuse to let him or her destroy himself or destroy us. Instead, we rebuild him with encouragement; we rebuild her with re-enforcement. Give children the opportunity to succeed. And support whatever success they might have, even if, like you and I, that success is imperfect. It is not enough for the Word of God to be scattered into a home. It must take root. When it is nurtured by our prayers, and cared for with our charity, it will grow.

It is our own fault if we let other things get in the way of the Word of God. The parable in the Gospel says that sometimes the Divine Sower's seed falls on the pathways through the fields. There is no union with the Word, it is simply there, and it is lost to the birds of the sky. Sometimes we refuse to make God's Word the guide of our lives. We refuse to delve into what God is calling us to. We know we can learn about the Lord by studying the Bible, by praying over the scripture, by keeping a union with God, but we are just too lazy to pray. Sad, but that is what it is, sometimes we are just too lazy to pray, we don't make time for Him, the Love of our lives, and then we become shocked with our own actions, shocked that we easily trade His Presence for the fleeting pleasures of life. His Presence has been stolen from us by the birds of the air.

The parable then says that sometimes the seed falls on rocky ground. It doesn't develop roots. This part of the parable really cuts us to the core, because it says that the enthusiasm for the Word, the enthusiasm for the Lord, is not good enough. It is wonderful to go to have spiritual experiences. It is wonderful to attend the Holy Week Services at Our Lady of the Rosary. We glow with the Love of God. But those good feelings will die out with time, unless we search for more than feelings. Feelings are not the only sign of God's presence. St. Teresa of Calcutta wrote that she felt completely dry and abandoned by Christ throughout her life, but she never stopped proclaiming Him with her life. If nothing changes in our lives after our continual encounters with Christ, then we will reduce these spiritual experience to mere feeling.

Sometimes the seed falls among the thickets and thorns. God's word takes root, but other things take priority in our lives. All of us have many activities and obligations. What we seem to forget is that our primary responsibility is to the Kingdom of God. We have been give the Word. We cannot allow the other concerns around us choke off his Presence within us. We cannot allow ourselves to become deaf to His Call to rebuild His Church.

But there are times that the seed falls on good soil. There are the people who care for the Presence of the Lord, who are more concerned with His Kingdom than their own emotional feelings of His Presence. These are the people who refuse to let anything the world throws at them choke off the mission they have been entrusted with by the Divine Sower.

We can be these people, you and I. We can be the people who throughout our

lives are dedicated to the Kingdom of God.

He gives us His Word. But the Word is a seed. What are we going to do with it?

Today we pray for the courage to be good soil.