

15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR A 2020

A farmer goes out to sow the seed. The seed falls all over, some on the footpath, some on rocky ground, some on thorny bushes, some on good soil. What does Jesus want to tell us here? He describes exactly what happens when he himself speaks to his listeners – to you and me.

Jesus is the farmer who went out sowing in his field. The seed is his words – the word of God – something more than human words. The people gathered around him are the soil for the seed to be sown.

Jesus spoke to them. Just as the farmer scatters his seed on the varied soil around him, so Jesus offers the one word of God to the varied audience in front of him – and to all of us today. Some listeners accept it, some reject it; some are overjoyed by it, others remain untouched. Yet for all it remains a fertile seed.

Now, let's take a look on the different kinds of ground – which are we – on which the seed fell. The seed and the ground, just like God's word and human's life, have to be in close connection. They need each other. The seed needs the ground to grow up and to bear fruit; without seed, plant, and fruit, the ground would become lifeless. It is the same for us, and our relationship with God. God's word is made for us; it can only take root in us. We are made for God's word; God can only bear fruit through us.

I remember the time when I was in refugee camps, a priest "Fr. John" came to visit the camps and celebrated the Mass for us every week. He always brought with him lots of pocket-sized bibles to give to people in the camps – both Catholics and non-Catholics. Most people did not read the Bible. I felt too bad when seeing many of those little bibles thrown in garbage cans. Then I reported it to Fr. John and suggested him not giving out the bibles any more. "It was such a waste," I told him. Fr. John calmly said: "It is not a waste. Can you see: Jesus left behind 99 other sheep in order to find a lost sheep? 99 bibles may be thrown in the garbage cans, but who knows, a person can find the way back to Jesus." Before gaining something, we have to lose something, even greater thing. God so loved the world that he gave up something very valuable, his only beloved Son, in order to save the lives of many.

This is what we learn from the word of God today. To do the work of evangelization, we sometimes face opposition, even defeats, but we don't give up, for God's grace is always with us. As in the first reading, God said to us through the prophet Isaiah: "make our lives fertile and fruitful, like the seeds given to the one who knows how to sow... so that God's word shall not return to him void, but abundant." There are times when we harden our hearts and do not listen to God speaking to us. But now Jesus challenges us to make ourselves into good soil for the word of God.

To encourage people to keep doing God's work, Archbishop Oscar Romero gives us a beautiful reflection called *Ministers to the Future*. He wrote: "We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water the seeds already planted knowing they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that affects far beyond our capabilities... [Our works] may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the Master Builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs... We are prophets of a future that is not our own."

Jesus' message encourages us to keep our faith in the midst of discouragement. That is what we need during this difficult time with the pandemic. Just like the sower doesn't want to waste his seeds, but sometimes he has to lose something in order to gain something. Jesus asks us to have patience and courage. Do your work. Keep on. Sow the seed. Leave the rest to God. There are seeds that fall on rich soil, and produce fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirty-fold.

MASS INTENTIONS (from Sun. July 12 to Sat. July 18)

Sunday	8 a.m.	SC ...	for those affected by Covid-19
Monday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Fr. Vincent Bui Doan (repose)
Tuesday	No Mass
Wednesday	8 a.m.	SC ...	for repose of Peter & Martha Phan (Fr. Phan's grandparents)
Thursday	8 a.m.	SC ...	George & Ginny Kerb's family (for thanksgiving)
Friday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Mamita Emiliana Taaca (for healing)
Saturday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Walter & Barbara Echo's family (thanksgiving for health)