Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 13:1–23): 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."

"A sower went out to sow"

Fr. Jorge LORING SJ
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Today, we consider the parable of the sower. It has a special force and charm because it is the word of the Lord Jesus Himself. The message is clear: God is generous in sowing, but the realization of the fruits of His sowing also depends — at the same time — on our free correspondence. That the fruit depends on the ground where it falls is something that everyday experience confirms to us. For example, among students from the same class, some end up with a religious vocation and others as atheists. They have received the same instruction, but the seed fell on different ground.

The good ground is our heart. In part, being rich soil is a matter of nature; but more importantly, being rich soil depends on our will. Thus, on the one hand, there are people who pursue empty pleasure over virtue. In them, the parable is fulfilled: the weeds (that is, the worries of the world and the seduction of wealth) "choke the word and it bears no fruit" (Mt 13:22).

On the other hand, there are those who seek to follow Christ and lovingly welcome the seed of God and make it bear fruit —even if they have to mortify themselves to do so. Christ already said it: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit" (Jn 12:24). The Lord also warned us that the path to salvation is narrow and constricted (cf. Mt 7:14): what is of great value, costs a lot. Nothing of value is achieved without effort.

Those who let themselves be led by their appetites will have a heart like a wild jungle. On the contrary, pruned fruit trees bear better fruit. Thus, holy people have not had an easy life, but they have been models for humanity. "Not all of us are called to martyrdom, certainly, but we are called to achieve Christian perfection. But virtue requires a strength that... demands long and very diligent work, and we should never interrupt, until death. So, this can be termed as a slow and continued martyrdom" (Pius XII).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "It is necessary to remember God more often than one breathes" (Saint Gregory Nazianzus)

- The seed often meets with the aridity of our heart and even when received is likely to remain barren. However, through the gift of fortitude, the Holy Spirit liberates the soil of our heart (Francis)

- “The Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, and the apostolic catechesis describe for us the paths that lead to the Kingdom of heaven. Sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we tread them, step by step, by everyday acts. By the working of the Word of Christ, we slowly bear fruit in the Church to the glory of God” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 1724)