

Sunday 15th (A) in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 13,1-23): That same day Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside. As many people gathered around him, He got in a boat. There He sat while the whole crowd stood on the shore, and He spoke to them in parables about many things.

Jesus said, «The sower went out to sow and, as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground where there was little soil, and the seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was not deep. But as soon the sun rose the plants were scorched and withered because they had no roots. Again other seeds fell among thistles; and the thistles grew and choked the plants. Still other seeds fell on good soil and produced a crop; some produced a hundredfold, others sixty and others thirty. If you have ears, then hear!».

Then his disciples came to him with the question, «Why do you speak to them in parables?». Jesus answered, «To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but not to these people. For the one who has, will be given more and he will have in abundance. But the one who does not have will be deprived of even what he has. That is why I speak to them in parables, because they look and do not see; they hear, but they do not listen or understand. In them the words of the prophet Isaiah are fulfilled: ‘Much as you hear, you do not understand; much as you see, you do not perceive. For the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears hardly hear and their eyes dare not see. If they were to see with their eyes, hear with their ears and understand with their heart, they would turn back and I would heal them’. But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears, because they hear. For I tell

you that many prophets and upright people would have longed to see the things you see, but they did not, and to hear the things you hear, but they did not hear it.

»Now listen to the parable of the sower. When a person hears the message of the Kingdom but without taking it to himself, the devil comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed that fell along the footpath. The seed that fell on rocky ground stands for the one who hears the word and accepts it at once with joy. But this fickle and has no roots. No sooner is he harassed or persecuted because of the word, than he gives up. The seed that fell among the thistles is the one who hears the word, but then the worries of this life and the love of money choke the word, and it does not bear fruit. As for the seed that fell on good soil it is the one who hears the word and understands it; this bears fruit and produces a hundred, or sixty, or thirty times more».

«The sower went out to sow»

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Today, we consider the parable of the sower. It has a special force and charm because it is our Lord Jesus' own word.

The message is quite clear: God is generous while sowing, but the very success of his sowing is also contingent —at the same time— on our free response. That the fruit depends upon the soil where the seeds fall is something that our daily experiences already tell us. For instance, amongst the pupils of the same school and the same class, some may end up with a religious calling while others may end as atheists. They heard the same messages, but the soils where the seeds fell were different.

The good soil is our heart. Partly, because of our own good nature; but, mostly, because of our own will. Some people prefer to enjoy themselves rather than trying

to be better. With these persons it happens the same as in the parable: the thistles (that is, the worries of this life and the love of money) «choke [the Word]; and it does not bear fruit» (Mt 13:22).

But, those who, instead, treasure the being, they lovingly receive God's seeds and make them bear fruit. Although, doing it means considerable mortification. Jesus Christ said it too: «I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds» (Jn 12:24). The Lord also warned us that the road to salvation is narrow and steep (cf. Mt 7:14): the more valuable it is, the more difficult to get. Priceless things cannot be obtained without effort.

Those enthralled by their own penchants will have a heart like a wild jungle. On the contrary, the fruit trees that are pruned on time will bear the best fruits. Saints never had an easy life, but they were models for Mankind. «Indeed, not all of us have been called to martyrdom, but certainly to attain the perfection of Christian life. But the virtue demands such a strength that (...) all the same it requires a long and painstaking work, which we should never interrupt, until we die. Accordingly, this may be considered as a slow and continuous martyrdom» (Pius XII).