September 13th: Memorial of Saint John Chrysostom, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Gospel text (*Mk* 4:1-10.13-20): Jesus began to teach by the lake, but such a large crowd gathered about him that He got into a boat and sat in it on the lake while the crowd stood on the shore. He taught them many things through stories or parables. In his teaching he said, «Listen! The sower went out to sow. As he sowed, some of the seed fell along a path and the birds came and ate it up. Some of the seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil; it sprang up immediately because it had no depth; but when the sun rose and burned it, it withered because it had no roots. Other seed fell among thornbushes and the thorns grew and choked it, so it didn't produce any grain. But some seed fell on good soil, grew and increased and yielded grain; some produced thirty times as much, others sixty and others one hundred times as much». And Jesus added, «Listen then, if you have ears».

Jesus said to them, «Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any of the parables? What the sower is sowing is the word. Those along the path where the seed fell are people who hear the word, but as soon as they do, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Other people receive the word like rocky ground. As soon as they hear the word, they accept it with joy, but they have no roots so it lasts only a little while. No sooner does trouble or persecution come because of the word, than they fall. Others receive the seed as among thorns. After they hear the word, they are caught up in the worries of this life, false hopes of riches and other desires. All these come in and choke the word so that finally it produces nothing. And there are others who receive the word as good soil. They hear the word, take it to heart and produce: some thirty, some sixty and some one hundred times as much».

«What the sower is sowing is the word»

Fr. Joaquim MESEGUER García
(Rubí, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, we celebrate the memory of one of the greater sowers of the Divine Word throughout the history of the Church: St. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), i.e. "John Golden Mouth", which is precisely what this nickname means, because of the splendor and sublimity of his eloquence when divulging the Christian doctrine. «Behold, the sower went out to sow» (Mk 4:3): all the ministry of Chrysostom, first as a deacon and presbyter of Antioch and, afterwards, as bishop of Constantinople, was a tireless sowing of the Word of God through which he taught the contents of the truth of the faith.

John’s preaching raised in his hearers, as if dealing with different worlds, very different reactions: from the response and conversion of some to the opposition and rejection from others; particularly serious was the empress Eudoxia's aversion towards the Bishop John because of his continued accusations against the prevailing luxury of the imperial court of Constantinople while most of its population lived, if not in misery, in great poverty.

St. John Chrysostom will be one of the defenders of the evangelical justice that has laid the foundations of the social doctrine of the Church; a pastor of the peripheries, living with the smell of the sheep, in Pope Francis’ own words, who knew how to transform this smell in the sweet aroma of Christ. St. John taught the believers that they would find Christ in the liturgy and in the service to the poor: "the very Same One who said: “This is my body", and with His Word rendered real what he was saying, also said: “I was hungry and you fed me"». And he put it into practice.

"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear" (Mk 4:9): in the action of hearing and giving fruit it will help us greatly to follow the testimony of those who have preceded us on the road, as St. John Chrysostom.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

. “Many words would not be necessary if our works bore true testimony.” (Saint John Chrysostom)

- “Saint John Chrysostom reaffirmed the discovery that God loves each one of us with an infinite love and therefore desires salvation for us all.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Through his Word, God speaks to man. By words, mental or vocal, our prayer takes flesh. Yet it is most important that the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer: ‘Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervor of our souls’ (Saint John Chrysostom).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nº 2700)