

HOMILY for 15th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's Gospel discusses the Parable of the Sowing and various soils. Reflecting on it, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A farmer didn't have a chance to unload his truck before church on Sunday. After the service, a little boy saw the big load & asked, "What've you got in your truck, sir?"

"Fertilizer," the farmer replied.

"What are you going to do with it?" the boy curiously inquired.

"Put it on strawberries," the farmer answered.

"You ought to come home with us," the boy said. "We put sugar & whipped cream on ours!"

Anyway, this Sunday's Gospel is a unique parable & yet quite familiar to the disciples & the public. Jesus often used Nature & daily life experiences to explain about the spiritual world & the kingdom of God. Today He told them the Parable of Sowing, which is something people see around them every day. I don't know if you have ever done any farming or growing something before or not. If you have not, I would suggest you join our Parish Gardening Team & have some fun while gaining valuable lessons on gardening. While you are contemplating on that decision, I would like to talk to you about the formula for a successful harvest. That formula consists of best seeds, good weather with some nice rain, & well-prepared soil. If one of those three ingredients is not met, the whole harvest would fail in the end.

This Sunday's Parable assumes that we have the first two ingredients ready, namely, the best seeds & good weather to provide the perfect growing condition & make the growing miracle happen. Hence, it wants us to concentrate on the last ingredient, or well-prepared soil & work hard to nurture it. For it is the key factor, in my humble opinion, to determine whether we would have a boom harvest or bust one. That is why today's Parable wants to discuss with us about various types of soils & their end results. Certainly, we could talk to a farmer or a professional grower to confirm that well-prepared soil is the secret to a bountiful harvest. That is why most farmers have spent countless hours in the fields to till the soil & fertilize it. They have worked days and nights to nurture the soil & try to come up with new ways to maximize its yield. In fact, I know that farmers would pray for a snowy winter to retain more water in their fields. For farmers all want their soil to yield a hundred, or sixty, or thirty-fold harvest. If farmers would care that much about their soil & harvests, shouldn't we do the same with our spiritual soil & its yield?

Most people think that they only come to church or pray when they need God to do something for them. That is why churches & temples were all filled up after the national tragedy of September eleventh because people felt scared & uncertain. Then, peaceful & good time comes along; & some people just stop praying & coming to churches and temples altogether. Believe it or not, this Sunday's Readings, especially the Gospel, want us to realize another important reason for us to come to churches & temples. It might come as a surprise for most of us, but we come to churches or pray regularly because we want to prepare our spiritual soil every opportunity possible. Sadly, that is one of the most important reasons for us to pray that the majority of spiritual writers & speakers often do not focus & talk about. We usually hear that we must pray or come to church regularly because we do not want to commit a mortal sin or go to Hell. We have been forced to all of our spiritual duties out of guilt

throughout our Church Tradition. Perhaps this Sunday is the moment for us to reflect & consider our praying & church-going times as the opportunities to take good care of our spiritual soil. When we begin to look at our spiritual life that way, we will no longer consider our regular praying or church-going habit as a mandatory responsibility. Instead, it would be a wonderful opportunity that would reward us abundantly in the end. That is why St. Paul has this reminder for us in today's Second Reading, "I consider the sufferings of the present to be as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us... We ourselves, although we have the Spirit as first fruits, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies."

I do not know if you have ever wondered why holy folks such as Abraham, Moses, & the saints in the Bible & our Christian/Catholic tradition would be able to have a special line of communication to God while the rest of the world does not. The secret for that is being revealed to us in today's Gospel as they evidently searched for every opportunity to work on their spiritual soil. They spent more time with the Lord in prayer & followed all of His Commandments. They never wanted to do anything that might disappoint the Lord. They worked on their spiritual soil days & nights to the point that they created a special line of communication with God. Hence, the people of God would come back to them often & ask them to intercede with God for their needs. We could have that same special bond with God if we would look for every opportunity to work on our spiritual soil every day.

My dear brothers & sisters, every one of us would want to be the most productive soil, instead of the bad ones, to bring about the most successful harvest. Otherwise, we would disappoint ourselves & the grower at the harvest time with bad results. In order for us to achieve the most successful harvest & the best soil, we must work on our spiritual soil days & nights with the help of prayers & good Christian/Catholic way of life. By focusing on preparing our spiritual soil, we will be ready to receive divine messages for us daily & let the Word of God grow in us to produce a successful harvest in the end.