



Church of the Holy Family
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THE POWER AND EFFICACY OF GOD'S WORD

The **first reading** is taken from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 55:10-11. The word of God which came to the Chosen People through the prophets, and the divinely inspired writers, came out of God's loving interest in His people. He wanted to prepare them for the inheritance, the real "promised land," that, when the messianic age (the "fullness of time") came, would be theirs, provided their lives on earth were lived as they should be. — *The Sunday Readings* by Fr. Kevin O'Sullivan, O.F.M.

The **second reading** is from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans 8:18-23 and is about present suffering and the glory of God. Suffering is an essential part of the Christian life and one who truly believes will have his or her share of hardships and trials. Yet, these are not ends in themselves, as there is hope that they will terminate with the full revelation of the glory of God. The theme and message of St. Paul is not to lose hope in the Lord into whose risen life we have been initiated by Baptism. — *A Celebrants Guide to the New Sacramentary - A Cycle* by Kevin W. Irwin

The **Gospel** is from St. Matthew 13:1-23. Christ's description of His audience, that day in Galilee, is unfortunately as true today as it was then. His message of salvation has been preached to a great part of the world's population, but the proportion of those who accept it and live up to it, is about the same today as it was then.

There are millions of men and women today, who are like the seed sown on the unploughed path. They refuse to accept the message, they have no thought for their future, they are content to end in the grave after their few years of misery and hardship on this planet.

There are others who see the truth and the consolation of the Christian gospel, but when it comes to making sacrifices for it, they give up. The message did not sink into their hearts and minds. They are like the seed which fell on rocky ground because the faith had no deep roots in their lives.

Others again, and they are legion, are like the seed that fell among the briars and thorns. They accepted the faith and it took root in them, but later on, "the cares of the world and the delight in riches chokes the word and it proves unfruitful," - these are our Lord's own words.

The last class of Christians are like the seed sown on good soil. They not only accept Christ and his teaching, but they live up to it, and, come what may, they are faithful to it. These will produce fruit and will earn for themselves eternal happiness.

Each one of us can look into his own conscience today and discover to which class he or she belongs.

- Are some of us perhaps, like the seed that fell on the rocky ground? While Christianity makes no very difficult demand we are all for it, but when it demands mortification, the curbing of passion, real sacrifices for our neighbour, do we forget our Christian calling then and ignore its precepts?
- And how does our type of Christianity stand up to the temptations of the world - the desire to get all the enjoyment we can out of this life, licit or illicit, breaking God's commandments weekly or maybe daily? Are we chasing after wealth and power, using all our energies to rise in the world to be above our neighbour by fair or foul means?

- If the above are our aims in life, our Christianity has been or is being choked out of us.

There are millions of saints in heaven today, enjoying eternal happiness, who had some, if not all, of our present failings. We, too, can be with them one day, provided we do what they did. They repented sincerely and remained God's close friends, until he called them to himself. May the merciful God give us the grace to imitate them while we yet have time.

For our personal and communitarian Reflection:

- What can the parable say to the Church of today? Which soil does our ecclesial community represent? On the personal level, what interior availability and understanding do we manifest in our listening to the Word?
- Is it not true that the dangers Jesus pointed out to His disciples concerning the welcoming of the Word are relevant to us, too, for instance, fickleness before difficulties, negligence, anxiety for the future, daily worries?
- The disciples were capable of asking Jesus, of questioning Him about their worries and difficulties. On your journey of faith to the Word of God, to whom do you address your questions? The replies that Jesus communicates to us in our intimate and personal relationship with Him depend on the sort of question we ask.
- The figure of the sower recalls that of the Church in its commitment to evangelization: to know how to communicate in a new way the person of Jesus and the values of the Gospel.

The Church has to stand out for the authoritative character of its teaching, for its outspokenness and for the force of its actions. Today we need to be confident, eager and tireless evangelizers.

Every ecclesial community is urged by the parable of the sower not to be selective of persons or social contexts for the proclamation of the Gospel; we must have a broad vision and dedicate ourselves, even in what seem to be impossible situations, to communicating the Gospel.

Every pastoral action of evangelization experiences a first moment of ephemeral enthusiasm, which, however, may be followed by a cold reaction and opposition.

Pastoral attempts are comparable to the threefold attempt of the sower. In the end they are rewarded by the threefold harvest.

It is certain that the word of Jesus buds and bears fruit in hearts open to His action, but we must not cease from shaking our sluggishness, our indecision and the hardness of hearing of many believers.

“And we can ask ourselves: how is our heart? Which soil does it resemble: that of the path, the rocks, the thorns? It’s up to us to become good soil with neither thorns nor stones, but tilled and cultivated with care, so it may bear good fruit for us and for our brothers and sisters.

And it will do us good not to forget that we too are sowers. God sows good seed, and here too we can also ask ourselves: which type of seed comes out of our heart and our mouth? Our words can do much good and also much harm; they can heal and they can wound; they can encourage and they can dishearten. Remember: what counts is not what goes in but what comes out of the mouth and of the heart. (Pope Francis, Angelus address, July 13, 2014).”

Fr Eugene Vaz