



**Homily 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time (A)**  
**Most Rev. Jose H. Gomez**  
**Archbishop of San Antonio**

**My sisters and brothers in Christ:**

**The readings of Today's Mass are about the beautiful reality of the ongoing relationship between God and the human person. Jesus was teaching his disciples about the kingdom of God and he did it telling them a parable.**

**"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"**

**The first thing that we should notice it's the fact that God wants to talk to us in a way that we can understand. "By using parables Jesus keeps his listeners' attention, whether they are uneducated or not, and by means of the most ordinary things of daily life he gives life to the deepest supernatural mysteries" Navarre Bible, p. 102.**

**Even the Apostles were curious about the reason for talking in parables: "Why do you speak to them in parables? Jesus then explained to them that he had to do it in that way because it was difficult for them to understand: "because they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand"**

**"Jesus' teaching continues to provide every generation with light and guidance on moral conduct...through them he has graphically shown us the riches of grace, the life of the Church, the demands of the faith and even the mystery of God's own inner life" Navarre Bible, p. 102.**

**Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed continues to be meaningful for us in our modern urban societies, just as he taught his followers over two thousand years ago.**

**We can understand the importance of the seed falling into good ground to bear fruit. We can understand the existence of rocky ground, thorns and the lack of receptivity of the people listening to Jesus. It is a great way to teach the mysteries of the Kingdom of God in a simple manner.**

**But, before going to the passage of the Gospel, let's notice that the first reading reminds us God's desire that his Word be effective in our life: "my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it".**

The second reading talks to us about the need for creation and especially the human person to freely give worship to God: "in the glorious freedom of the children of God"

"We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves ... we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies"

Then, the passage of the Gospel makes clear the importance of our receptivity and correspondence to God's Word. The seed of God's Word and his love for us must fall on rich soil to nourish it.

Today, my sisters and brothers, we have to acknowledge that sometimes it doesn't. As a matter of fact, must of the time it doesn't. Must of the time it falls on the path, on rocky ground or among thorns.

In the last part of today's Gospel, Jesus gives a clear explanation of the different kinds of ground that are not good.

It seems to me that today we have to ask ourselves if the soil of our soul resembles one or the other.

First: "the seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil ones comes and steals away what was sown in his heart"

"The path is soil that has been walked on until it has become hard... It is like empty souls, prepared to accept only external things. Such souls are incapable of recollecting their thoughts and guarding their senses. They have no order in their affections and are not particularly watchful over their feelings, so that they frequently allow their imagination to engage in useless thoughts" (Cf. In Conversation with God 4, 19).

Then: "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 stony -'rocky ground'- represents superficial souls with little inner depth, souls that are inconstant and incapable of persevering. They have good dispositions; they even receive grace with joy, but when the moment comes to confront difficulties they turn back. They are not capable of sacrificing themselves in order to fulfill the resolutions they have made so their resolutions die without bearing fruit" (Cf. In Conversation with God 4,19)

"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"

**“Love of riches, a disordered ambition to gain influence or power, and excessive concern for well-being and a comfortable way of life are like sharp thorns that prevent any union with God” (Cf. Ibid.).**

**We can see how important it is for the soil to be ready for God’s word. The preparation of the soil makes a big difference in the final results.**

**“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”**

**In the words of St. John Chrysostom: “We can see that the difference depends on the person receiving it, for even where the soil is good there is a great deal of difference between one patch of ground and another. You can see that neither the farmer nor the seed is at fault, but the soil on which the sowing was done. This is not a result of nature, but of the disposition of the will” (Cf. In Conversation with God, 4. 19.3).**

**The rich soil that we tend and nurture to receive God’s word and love, must be fortified and cared for through great effort. Each day we must tend to our garden, deepening our knowledge and love of God, through prayer life, and our participation in the Sacraments.**

**Let’s us be sincere and accept the situation of our soul. Let us accept that sometimes we do not receive God’s Word with the right dispositions or at least that we can do better in preparing our soul for the Grace of God to be more effective in our souls. What do we have in our souls: a hard path, rocky ground, thorns or a rich soil?**

**Let me finish with one practical suggestion, that can be helpful to make a better preparation to receive God’s grace and that it comes from today’s Gospel too. The suggestion is to try to be more attentive to God’s word: “Whoever has ears ought to hear”.**

**To listen to God through the Scriptures, preaching, the Liturgy, spiritual reading and the teachings of the Church**

**Let us keep in mind Jesus’ words in today’s Gospel: “Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears, because they hear”, and make sure that we listen more attentively.**

**May the Blessed Virgin Mary, who knew how to listen, help us to listen, to be receptive to God’s Word and bear fruit in our lives: a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.**