

Homily 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday 16/7/17

I purposefully read the shorter form of today's gospel because we're all so familiar with the interpretation that Jesus gives to His apostles – and yet the freshness of the way He delivered that parable is very notable. I was looking at Barclay's commentary on this gospel, and he remarks that Jesus didn't say 'imagine the sower,' but 'look at the sower.' Barclay was saying how crisp this was. Jesus had gone to the lakeside, and was in a boat and had asked the apostles to look at the sower in the adjacent field. Jesus then unfolded to them one of His most famous parables.

I think we can also use this parable to take stock of our own spiritual lives. Take the first part - 'Imagine a sower going out to sow. Some seed fell on the "edge of the path," and the birds came and ate it up.' Some seed also fell on rock or among thorns. I would suggest that you and me are very much at the centre of this image. We could take the unfruitful seed to mean that we are struggling with some aspects of the words of Jesus, or Church teaching, so we push this unwelcome knowledge to the "edge of our lives" where it can't grow and challenge us. Some of the teachings of Jesus and the Church fall on rock – the rock of our own stubborn hard natures – we don't want to listen to this truth. And some of the seed – the Divine light of Jesus, falls among thorns. In other words Jesus is attacking some compulsion in our own lives – something we don't want to change, and we block out His invitation to change by allowing the world to drown us in other pointless distractions.

It would be a good exercise to sit down prayerfully with this parable and pen and paper, and look at our own lives – what are we pushing to the edge of the path, which of Jesus's teachings are falling on rock, what in our spiritual lives are we allowing to be choked by thorns? The Prophet Isaiah encourages us to keep on trying to improve when he says, 'The word of God never goes forward if it's heard, without

also coming back and achieving what it was meant to do.’ I would say, look at the end of this parable too, ‘..... and some seed fell into good soil.’ We people of faith, with all our weaknesses, hearing the word of God, the teachings of the Church, are encouraged to fulfil our baptismal destiny and ‘produce a crop .... some 100 fold some 60 some 30.’ Note the differences in percentages – they are different for all of us depending on the negative influences – thorns – in our lives – BUT the vital thing is that we persevere in the spiritual life, and give God His central place in our lives – and TRY to make a difference in the world.

We should also avoid the vice of envy when we see others achieving 100 or 60 while we imagine ourselves among the lowly 30 – the important thing is to produce a crop – a Christian life of quality and witness. A 30 fold crop is nevertheless a harvest. Jesus praises the harvest! He praises the good seed in you that you have allowed to grow – and always gently urges us to do, and produce so much more!