

Sexagesima Sunday 4 February 2018

“To you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables, that ‘Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’” Lk. 8:10

As we learned last week, in these three Sundays before Lent, the texts of the Liturgy help us recognize ourselves as weak sinners who need to repent in preparation for the Lenten and Paschal mysteries. With this in mind, we can understand the explanation Jesus gave to the Apostles about why He spoke in parables. It is not to confuse people, but to make them search more into their own hearts in order to understand what Jesus teaches through the familiar images and events found in His parables. Dom Gueranger in his book, *The Liturgical Year Vol. 4, (Septuagesima)*, comments on today’s liturgy: **“The Church offers to our consideration, during this week of Sexagesima, the history of Noah and the deluge... This awful chastisement of the human race by the deluge was a fresh consequence of sin. This time, however, there was found just one man; and it was through him and his family that the world was restored. Having once more mercifully renewed His covenant with His creatures, God allows the earth to be repopled, and makes the three sons of Noah become the fathers of the three great families of the human race... This is the mystery of the Divine Office during the week of Sexagesima. The mystery expressed in today’s Mass is full of greater importance. The earth is deluged by sin and heresy. But the word of God, the seed of life, is ever producing a new generation: a race of men, who like Noah, fear God. It is the word of God that produces those happy children, of whom the beloved disciple speaks, saying: ‘They are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.’ Jn. 1:13 ... What we have to do, during these days of Sexagesima, is to escape from the deluge of worldliness, and take shelter in the Ark of salvation; we have to become that good soil, which yields a hundredfold from the heavenly seed. Let us flee from the wrath to come, lest we perish with the enemies of God: let us hunger after the word of God, which converteth and giveth life to souls” (cf. Ps. 18). Gueranger, p. 148-150. We can see how many fail to produce fruit from the word of God in today’s Gospel (Luke 8:4-15) where Jesus’**

Parable of the Sower reveals that three out of the four types of soil do not bear fruit. The fourth kind of soil is the good ground which will yield fruit **“a hundredfold.”** St. Paul in today’s Epistle (II Cor. 11: 19-33; 12:1-9) shows how he has yielded much fruit in all the sufferings he underwent for the gospel.

St. Paul, a true Apostle

In all the epistles of St. Paul, Corinthians alone is full of many examples of what this loyal Apostle had to endure to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. St. Paul is not boasting, but he wants to show his followers what he has suffered for them and the gospel. He first reminds them, **“For you gladly put up with fools, because you are wise yourselves! For you suffer it if a man enslaves you, if a man devours you, if a man takes from you, if a man is arrogant, if a man slaps your face!”** I Cor. 11: 19-20. These **“pseudo-apostles,”** and **“ministers of Satan”** (II Cor. 11:13-5)--- **“those brethren from Jerusalem ... had come to Corinth boasting of their pure-blooded Judaism and casting suspicions on St. Paul’s Apostolic Mission. It is only the need of his Corinthian flock that drives the Apostle to that boasting of his origin and his work—which in other circumstances he would have despised, and even now in his heart regards as foolish.”** Msgr. Patrick Boylan, *“The Sunday Epistle and Gospels,”* p. 135. **“Are they ministers of Christ? I—to speak as a fool—am more: many labours, in prisons more frequently, in lashes above measure, often exposed to death. From the Jews five times I received forty lashes less one. Thrice I was scourged, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and day I was adrift on the sea, in journeyings often, in perils from floods, in perils from robbers, in perils from my own nation....”** II Cor. 12:23-26 St Paul recounted the litany of his sufferings to prove how much he was a true apostle and thus refute his adversaries. No one can read the summary of his sufferings without being impressed by the many trials he endured for preaching the gospel. Later, he mentions that the Lord sent him **“a thorn in the flesh, messenger from Satan, to buffet me.”** (II Cor. 12:7) lest he puffed up with pride. Like a true Apostle, he will suffer it for the Lord: **“Gladly therefore I will glory in my infirmities, that the strength of Christ may dwell in me.”** II Cor. 12: 9 St. Paul’s life yielded fruit not just a hundredfold but a thousandfold and more than a thousandfold.

Souls without fruit

In today's parable of "*The Sower*," we see that those who do not bear fruit are represented by three of the four types of ground in which the seed is sown. The seed is good, but the fruit it bears is dependent on the place where it is sown. Fr. Gabriel of St. Magdalen in his book of meditations, *Divine Intimacy* tells us the meaning of soil: "***The hard ground: souls that are frivolous, dissipated, open to all distractions, rumors, and curiosity; admitting all kinds of creatures and earthly affections. The word of God hardly reaches their heart when the enemy (the devil), having free access, carries it off, thus preventing it from taking root. The stony ground: superficial souls with only a shallow layer of good earth, which will be rapidly blown away, along with the good seed, by the winds of passion. These souls easily grow enthusiastic, but do not persevere and 'in time of temptation fall away.'***" (Lk. 8:13) They are unstable, because they have not the courage to embrace renunciation and to make the sacrifices which are necessary if one wishes to remain faithful to the word of God and to put it into practice in all circumstances. Their fervor is a straw fire which dies down and goes out in the face of the slightest difficulty. ***The ground covered with thorns: souls that are preoccupied with worldly things, pleasures, material interests and affairs. The seed takes root, but the thorns soon choke it by depriving it of air and light. Excessive solicitude for temporal things eventually stifles the rights of the spirit.***" Fr. Gabriel, OCD, *Divine Intimacy*, p. 249

"And other seed fell upon good ground, and sprang up and yielded fruit a hundredfold."

Lk. 8:8

"Lastly, the good ground is compared by Jesus to those who, 'with a right and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bear fruit in patience.' Lk. 8:15 ***The good and upright heart is the one which always gives first place to God, which seeks before everything else the kingdom of God and His justice. The seed of the divine word will bear abundant fruit in proportion to the good dispositions it finds in us: recollection, a serious and profound interior life, detachment, sincere seeking for the things of God above and beyond all earthly things, and finally perseverance without which the word of God cannot bear its fruit in us."*** *Divine Intimacy*,

p. 249 Those "***with a right and good heart***" (Lk. 8:15) will yield fruit a hundredfold as God's grace is always fruitful: "***And other seed fell upon good ground, and sprang up and yielded fruit a hundredfold.***" Lk. 8: 8. All we have to do is to look at the lives of the saints, like St. Paul in today's *II Epistle to the Corinthians*, and we can see God's grace bear fruit even beyond a hundredfold to a thousandfold and even more.

Who are saved?

If we apply the message of today's Gospel to our world, we might not see a pretty picture. Things have not changed with human nature. Jesus knew what kind of men his listeners were. So too today! The vast majority of souls are those who are represented by the seed on the wayside path, the rocky ground, and thorny bushes. They are not interested in God's word. If they do have some interest, the cares of the world and pleasures of riches distract them. In his treatise, "***The Little Number of Those Who Are Saved***," St. Leonard of Port Maurice*** quotes St. Augustine: "***The ark (Noah's Ark) was the figure of the Church. And these eight people who were saved signify that very few Christians are saved, because there are very few who sincerely renounce the world, and those who renounce it only in words do not belong to the mystery represented by that ark.***" p. 5 Were it not for the grace of God which comes to us through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and through the hands of our Immaculate Mother, there would be little hope for all of humanity. This is why Our Lady at Fatima in 1917 asked us to pray and sacrifice because she said that "***many souls go to hell because no one prays and sacrifices for them.***" This is why Our Lady begged us to pray the Rosary. Let us pray the Holy Rosary in the family and make sacrifices, and then many souls, especially in our families, will be saved and go to heaven.

*** This treatise of St. Leonard's is in our repository. Or contact lanhernefrs@talktalk.net

"Could you not, then, watch one hour with Me?" Mt. 26:40

St. Ambrose tells us how Jesus is the leaven to change the whole world. We have Jesus as true leaven and the Bread of Life in the Blessed Sacrament. We need to go to Jesus in the Sacred Host and ask Him to take over our lives.

“Therefore, if the Lord is wheat (as He Himself says in John 12:24), the Lord is the leaven, too, since leaven is usually made only of wheaten flour. Therefore, the Lord is rightly compared to leaven for when He was in the form of man, made small by humility and despised for His weakness, He contained within Himself such power of wisdom that the world itself could scarcely contain His doctrine. When He began to diffuse Himself throughout the world by virtue of His divinity, He immediately drew the entire human race into His substance by His power so that He might place the yoke of His Holy Spirit upon all of them, that is, make all Christians to be what Christ is....so Christ (like leaven) is broken up and dissolved by His various sufferings, and His moisture, that is, His precious blood, was poured out for our salvation, that it might by mingling itself with the whole human race, consolidate that race, which lay scattered abroad.” St. Ambrose in Cornelius A Lapide, *Commentary on John’s Gospel*, p. 29-30

The First Friday, 2 February 2018

Now is a good time to continue (or begin) the devotion to the **“Nine First Fridays”** of the Month. The Sacred Heart of Jesus promised to St. Margaret Mary: **“I promise thee in the excessive mercy of My Heart that My all-powerful love will grant to all those who communicate on the First Friday in nine consecutive months, the grace of final penitence; they shall not die in My disgrace nor without receiving the Sacraments; My Divine heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.”** There is no better way of honouring the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus than in receiving Holy Communion on the **“Nine First Fridays.”**

The First Saturday: 3 February 2018

Our Lady told Sr. Lucia in 1925 **“...I promise to assist at the hour of death, with all the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months go to confession and receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary and keep me company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me.”** If only we would do what Our Lady asks, we would be assured of eternal salvation. Our Lady promises us all the graces necessary for our salvation if we keep ***The Five First Saturdays!***