

12 July 2020 - Homily - Matthew 13:1-23

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In today's gospel from Matthew we hear Jesus present the parable of the sower. Jesus teaches from a boat and the people are on the seashore with the wall of sand dunes behind them. Jesus' voice would resonate along the sand dune wall, thus creating a natural amphitheatre. A sower character would have appealed to a rural audience of workers.

The road is the unploughed ground that is too tough and the seed lay on the surface and birds ate them. On rocky soil the seed sprout too soon and since there is no depth of soil they cannot sink down their roots and therefore dry up and die. The seed that falls among thorns has good soil, however the area is already occupied by hostile choking weeds. The seed that falls on good soil grows well, however not in equal measure. Equality of outcome is not what Jesus teaches. Each seed in good soil has equal opportunity to grow, however each will grow to a slightly different shape since the value of the individual is emphasized in Jesus' teachings.

The purpose of parables is to make the audience think outside the framework of their day to day living. The audience must participate if the parable is to have its effect. Our participation in sacramental life is crucial for the sacraments to take effect. The participation of the priest's actions and words is needed together with the Holy Spirit in order for transubstantiation (where the bread and wine turn into the body and blood of Christ) to take effect. Then, by participation, the people come up for communion and affirm with an "amen" their faith and receive, not take, communion from the priest or eucharistic minister as a gift from God. However the sacrament just like the parable is a mystery.

The seed in the parable is the kingdom of God. The different soils is the different human receptions of the kingdom. The mysteries of the kingdom are the hidden plans or designs of God for history, particularly for establishing His just rule through overcoming the forces of evil. Jesus is here to heal as he clearly states.

The role of the disciple is to first have the desire to learn, then to actually learn in order to receive understanding. It is by achieving understanding that the disciple can then do something propagate the faith. The 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit - Knowledge, understanding, courage, wisdom, counsel, piety, wonder and awe - aid the disciple in maximizing their opportunity to grow in the faith. - Praying for all of you