

Homily for the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 55:10–11; Romans 8:18–23; Matthew 13:1–23

My dear brothers and sisters,

One of the most encouraging things about today's Gospel is that Jesus never stops sowing the seed. He knows that some of it will fall on the path, some on rocky ground, some among thorns, and only some on good soil. Yet He keeps sowing. He never gives up on us.

That gives me great hope.

There are times when we can become discouraged. As parents, we wonder whether our children have listened to the values we tried to teach them. As grandparents, we pray for family members who have drifted away from the Church. As priests, catechists, teachers, and parishioners, we sometimes wonder whether our efforts make any difference. We speak about Christ, we try to live the Gospel, and yet we do not always see the results.

Today's readings remind us not to lose heart.

The prophet Isaiah assures us that God's word is never wasted. Just as the rain and snow water the earth and make it fruitful, so God's word always accomplishes His purpose. We may not see the harvest today or even tomorrow, but God is quietly at work.

St. Paul takes this even further. He reminds us that growth often comes through struggle. Just as a seed must be buried before it can produce life, so our own sacrifices, disappointments, and sufferings are never meaningless when united with Christ. God is able to bring life out of what seems barren and hope out of what seems hopeless.

Then Jesus asks each one of us a very personal question—not, "What kind of people are around you?" but, "What kind of soil are you?"

The beautiful thing about this parable is that it is not really about four different people. It is about each one of us. If we are honest, we can probably find all four types of soil somewhere in our own hearts.

Sometimes my heart is like the path. I hear God's word, but I am distracted. I rush from one task to another without allowing His word to sink in. Prayer becomes routine. Sunday Mass is attended, but the Gospel never reaches my heart because I am already thinking about tomorrow.

Sometimes my heart is rocky ground. I welcome God's word with enthusiasm, but when difficulties come, my commitment weakens. It is easy to follow Jesus when life is going well; it is much harder when illness comes, when relationships become difficult, or when prayers seem unanswered.

Sometimes my heart is filled with thorns. The worries of daily life, the pressure to succeed, concerns about money, health, family, or the future can slowly crowd out God's presence. None of these things are bad in themselves, but if they become our greatest concern, they leave little room for the Lord.

Yet, by God's grace, there are also moments when our hearts become good soil. Those are the moments when we truly listen, forgive someone who has hurt us, spend time in prayer, help

someone in need, or quietly trust God even when we cannot understand His plan. Those are the moments when the seed bears fruit.

The encouraging message of today's Gospel is that we are not locked into one kind of soil. Unlike the fields in nature, the soil of our hearts can change. God can soften what has become hard. He can remove the rocks of resentment. He can clear away the thorns of anxiety, pride, or selfishness. Every time we come to Him in prayer, every time we celebrate the Eucharist, every time we receive His forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, He is preparing the soil of our hearts once again.

As I reflected on this Gospel, I asked myself: *What part of my heart needs God's attention today?* Perhaps that is a question each of us should take home this week.

Maybe there is someone I need to forgive.

Maybe there is a habit I need to let go of.

Maybe I need to spend less time worrying and more time trusting.

Maybe I simply need to slow down enough to hear God speaking to me.

Jesus is still sowing His word into our lives every single day. He does not sow sparingly. He scatters His grace generously, even on imperfect soil, because He sees not only what we are today but what, with His grace, we can become.

As we gather around the altar today, let us ask the Lord for hearts that are open, humble, and receptive. May He remove whatever prevents His word from taking root within us. And may our lives bear the fruits of faith, hope, love, mercy, and compassion—not just for our own sake, but so that others, seeing those fruits, may come to know Christ through us.

Amen.