

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time – A

I need to check this out with the farmers in our parish, but I think that when a farmer goes about planting he or she is pretty careful about the seed.

A lot of thinking goes into how wide the rows should be, how far apart the seeds should be, how deep to plant them, etc.

The idea is to maximize the yield per acre, and how the seed is planted is a key element to that.

That should be our first clue that, when it comes to reading or hearing this parable, it's not really about farming techniques.

Because the farmer would be quick to point out that it's better to avoid throwing seeds on rocky ground and among thorns than just throwing it anywhere.

The sower in the parable appears to be a bit too haphazard is how he goes about his business to be someone whose example we are encouraged to follow.

But Jesus is not trying to make a point about farming. He's using the parable about something from everyday life to make a point about the spiritual life.

In this parable, it's not about where the seed is sown, it's about the reception the seed gets when it lands there.

God does not have to worry about return on investment, about how much seed is sown. And he doesn't. His word goes out to all the earth, indiscriminately. Anywhere where it might be received he's happy to throw

it.

What sort of reception his word receives—well, that's on us.

Jesus lists four different situations in which the seed is received, and what happens to it then.

You might think that that God does not have a very good success rate, and that he could have done better if he had focused on the good soil.

But in the spiritual life, the quality of the soil depends on the person doing the receiving.

Probably all of us have been in situations in which we would have to identify with the rocky ground, where the word is heard but not taken seriously enough to take deep root.

We might have said to ourselves, "That's too hard, or too foreign, or that Jesus really could not have meant that."

There are probably times when we can identify with the path where we are exposed to adversity or resistance and so, we give up,

Others call us names, or worse. They might make it known that they don't consider us Christian, or take issue with how we live out our faith, so we keep it all to ourselves and decide not to be witnesses to the good news that we have heard

Or maybe it's the thorns that we know we have to contend with, when we get too caught up in the cares of the world

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to give the word a proper hearing.

Other goals or commitments take precedence and command all our attention.

But it's also true that there are those times when things align. We get it. We have that "aha" moment, and we can move forward in faith.

One thing I like about this parable is that the good soil receives the word and produces fruit 30, 60, and 100 fold.

I like that there's a range, because that seems true to me.

There have been days, or better said, moments, when, much to my surprise, I said just the right thing, or did it. A 100-fold moment.

But those are rather rare in my case. But even a 30-fold moment is good, and worth the effort the sower has put into sowing his word into my life.

I would like there to be more "100-fold moments" and there are ways of becoming more receptive to God's word—by paying attention in prayer, by trusting in Him when adversity strikes, but keeping anxiety at bay with things like praying the rosary or using the Jesus prayer, and by acting upon the inspiration we receive.

But muddling through at the "30-fold" rate is still worth the effort.

Ultimately, it comes down to being receptive to the word as we are able, and letting it take root in our lives, and

trusting that it will have a good effect.

It's in the nature of the seed, God's word, as the first reading says, that it does not return to God empty. God has designed it so.

We need only to receive it and make a home for it, and let it unfold according to its nature.