

Homily For Saturday of the 24th Week of Ordinary Time - Year II

St Peter's 8:30AM Mass - Sept. 17, 2022

1 Cor 15:35-37,42-50 "As we have borne the image of dust, we will also bear the image of heaven."

Psalm 100:1-5 "You delivered my soul from death so that I may walk before God in the light of life."

Luke 7:11-17 "The seeds are the Word of God. The ones on the path are those who have heard."

Seeds of the Word

Introduction

We know that Sacred Scripture has in it many agricultural images. Sheep and goats and bulls and oxen are very common. Today, both with St. Paul and with Jesus, it is seeds. Whether a farmer or a home gardener, it is harvest time of year. Seeds are distant memories. If there was decent soil and watering and care, the full plants are producing what existed only in potential in those seeds. In both readings, there are explanations of how to be a disciple. Whether or not we are interested in seeds, the analogies are certainly relevant to us because of that.

I would like to begin with the passage from St. John Damascene, who says, "The whole earth is a living icon of the face of God." An icon is a kind of a window into a deeper mystery. All of creation reveals something about the creator. All of creation invites us to look at it and into it and through it so we can see the God who imbued it with a holy and divine life force.

1 Corinthians

Paul uses an analogy from nature to explain the resurrection. The belief was that the seed must die in order to become the plant. Scientists would likely not describe the process this way. However, from a spiritual point of view, there is a sense that the transformation which takes place requires that the original seed loses its identity as a seed and takes on what was only potential within the seed, but is now something new.

For the Greek Christians, the body did not have much status. It was the mind or heart of spirit that really counted. So, it was very strange to hear Paul talk about

the resurrection of the body in a glorified state. There is a new body, not a getting rid of flesh and blood but transforming flesh and blood into a spiritual state, keeping what was but, at the same time making it into something new. This is a change from one kind of glory, a created physical glory, an icon into the creator, into an immortal existence. It follows from Adam to Jesus.

Paul has to teach them the Jewish idea of hope, that God, who is the creator of all things, can remake us in the resurrection, with glorified bodies, not as zombies. Paul gives us a beautiful idea of heaven using the analogy of sowing seed. What comes back is different than what was sown.

The physical body gains a supernatural meaning. The physical body comes first, like the seed. But it is transformed into something greater. We Catholics should see in this a sacramental view. We use ordinary things of the earth: water, oil, candles, along with human words and actions which, when acted on by the Holy Spirit and our receptivity, become something that they were not.

Spiritually, we would say that the seed dies to its old way of life, as our old ways must die so that we can grow fully into ourselves and become saints. The best version of ourselves, which we often hear in the world, applies to us as well. Our best version is a saint.

Luke

In the New Testament, seed consistently refers to the Word of God or to faith. However, it does get confusing at times. Am I the seed or the soil or the plant or the fruit of the plant. Also, even if Jesus is the sower of the seed, as he indicates in his explanation of the parable, aren't we also sowers of seeds? These are just analogies or explanations of how faith works, so we can say that all of these things can be true. It depends on the context.

All these analogies about seeds can get mixed up. To make a summary, Jesus is the master sower. He is THE Word of God, which is sown everywhere, not in neat rows like I plant my garden, but cast everywhere. The seed needs a receptive

place to grow. A person is a seed which is a physical body waiting to be transformed into a spiritual body.

But it is not just individuals in which seeds are planted. God has always been about the business of saving a people. A parish like this one is also a seed which must be a fertile place where faith in God and in his Son can be nourished by the power of the Holy Spirit. And, just as an individual person can become so busy with ordinary things that he or she is not able to become extraordinary, so a parish community can become so concerned with keeping itself going from day to day that we lose sight of the fact that the kingdom of God is not about just keeping healthy. It is about transforming everything around it.

St Hildegard

I think today's saint Hildegard of Bingen would relish Paul's reflection on body and spirit. St. Hildegard von Bingen, an 11th century mystic led a remarkable and unusual life for a woman of her day. She was an avid composer of sacred music and liturgy, in addition to poems and plays. She also wrote heavily on theology, natural medicine, and natural science. At the age of 42, at the command of God, Hildegard began writing down what she saw in her visions.

She wrote proficiently on the harmony of created nature and man's need to live in balance with it, especially in virtue, morality, and the love of God, which led Pope Benedict XVI to declare her the fourth female Doctor of the Church in 2012 alongside Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, and Thérèse of Lisieux.

Call To Conversion

This is the mission of the Church that Christ has instilled. If it wasn't so, the Church would have died out with the few men and women who followed him around. God has a new purpose in our time. The world around us is consumed with fear. It is we who are called to tell that world, "Do not be afraid. Jesus has conquered the world. Now we are to live that way, as people being transformed into sons and daughters of light, being made ready for heaven.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Turn your eyes, O God, our shield. One day within your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.*

Collect: *O God, fill our hearts with the warmth of your love, so that we may attain your promises, which surpass every human desire.*

1 Corinthians: *Some will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a physical body. It is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being. The last Adam became a life giving spirit." The physical is first, then the spiritual. The first was from the earth, made of dust. The second is from heaven. As was the one of dust, so are those who are of the dust. And, as is the one of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the one of dust, we will also bear the image of the one of heaven. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

Psalm: *O most high, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. I am not afraid. What can flesh do to me? This I know, that God is for me. I will render thank offerings to you. For you have delivered my soul from death and my feet from falling, so that I may walk before God in the light of life.*

Luke: *When a great crowd gathered, Jesus said, "A sower went out to sow his seed. Some fell on the path and was trampled, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on the rock and, as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and it produced a hundredfold." His disciples asked him what this parable meant. Jesus said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God. But to others I speak in parables, so that looking they may not perceive and listening they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones on the path are those who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root. They believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear but, as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. But, as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance."*