

September 19, 2026 - Saturday of the 24th Week in Ordinary Time (even-numbered)

1 Cor 15:35-37, 42-49; Luke 8:4-15

H O M I L Y

Farming or gardening can be a good lesson in patience, trust, and surrender. Once the soil has been tilled, the seeds sown, and the plants watered, all that remains is to wait patiently. At first, there is no way to know for certain whether the seed will grow or not. Nor can one know to what extent it will grow. One can take various steps to create conditions that promote growth, but one cannot intervene in the process of growth itself. Keeping all this in mind, let us now return to today's Gospel reading.

The prophets of Israel, as well as Jesus, spoke to a people composed mostly of farmers and fishermen. That is why, when they wanted to speak about the Kingdom of God, they used images and parables related to life and growth. And in the Gospel we have just read, Jesus compares this Word to a seed.

One remarkable thing about this Gospel is that it contains not only a parable, but both the parable and its interpretation. This is very unusual, since the traditional use of parables involved a technique in which the rabbi or teacher would guide each listener to draw their own conclusions from the parable. That is why exegetes and commentators are fairly unanimous in believing that the second part of today's Gospel—that is, the interpretation—is not from Jesus Himself but represents the interpretation of the early Church.

In Matthew's text, this parable immediately follows the account in which Jesus' family members wanted to take Him by force and bring Him home, because they thought He had lost His mind. This parable is, in fact, Jesus' reflection on his ministry. His Word—the Word of God—is received in various ways. In some people, it finds a heart of stone and does not take root at all; in others, it takes root with difficulty, but it grows nonetheless. And when it has reached full maturity, that will be the End. In short, it is a message of hope.

When this parable was told in the early Church, an interpretation was added to it that was later attributed to Jesus. And, surprisingly, there was a shift in emphasis from the seed to the soil. All of Jesus'

attention—and concern—was focused on the seed itself, that is, on the Kingdom of God. For the early Christians, the concern gradually shifted to being as good a soil as possible to receive this seed.

Such a concern was obviously legitimate and found some basis in the parable itself, as told by Jesus. But this shift nonetheless illustrates quite well our human tendency to be more concerned with ourselves and the way we receive the Word of God than with the Word itself. Jesus was concerned with the Word! And His message is precisely that even in spite of our hardness of heart and our lack of cooperation, the seed of the Kingdom will grow to its full measure.

The reason for this shift in the object of our concern is probably our innate fear of suffering. And yet Paul, in his Letter to the Romans, reminds us that all the suffering we may experience is merely part of the process of growing toward the fullness of God's Kingdom within us. These are the normal pains of childbirth.

It's curious how easily we come up with all sorts of good reasons and excuses to shield ourselves from the painful reality of growth and take refuge in the more reassuring activity of preparing the soil. We feel safer when we're busy plowing the soil, pulling up weeds, and turning the earth in various ways. We "do" something and expect a reward for what we do. All of this is good and necessary. But the Gospel reminds us of another dimension: it reminds us of the need to wait patiently while the seed takes its time to grow; the need to experience the death of the seed without being sure that it will truly take root, without knowing how much it will grow. We do not control the growth. And that is painful for us. Both the process of growth and the fact that we cannot control it are painful.

While remaining aware of the need for ascetic practices, of the necessity to weed the garden of our hearts and water the plants there, let us not forget to return to what was most important to Jesus: the Word of God, the seed sown by the Father in humanity; and let us wait with confidence for its growth in each of us and in all of humanity. Let us also accept the suffering that is part of such a birth and such growth.

Armand Veilleux