

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, one God. Christ is in our midst.

In this morning's Gospel we heard the parable which Christ told about the sower who went out and sowed seeds on his land.

"Some fell along the path, and it was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on rocks; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture since its roots were shallow and could not take up enough moisture for the plant to survive.

And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it.

And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold."

We know that the sower is Jesus himself. We also know that by the seeds which he was sowing He means His doctrine, and by land, He means the souls of men. What happens to the seed? Three parts perished, and one is saved.

It was not the sower's fault that three parts perished, for the seed is the Word of God, His doctrines and God never fails.

The seed that landed on the path did not grow. It was the ground, that is the soul, that received it which caused the seed not to grow. The soul did not listen to the Word of God. These were careless people who rejected the teachings of Christ.

They never even bothered listening to the Word of God but instead listened to the word of the evil one and allowed him to snatch them away, thus devouring them.

The seeds which fell on the rock began to grow. There was, perhaps, just enough good soil to allow the seeds to begin to grow but since they are unable to develop roots they soon withered and died. They did not quench their thirst with the Life Giving Water of the Holy Spirit.

When trouble came into their lives, be it trials and tribulations for being Christians such is happening in the Mid-East today or the trials and tribulations of everyday life they soon turned their backs on Christ and their souls were lost.

These people had not taken time to develop a relationship with God. They felt that their own strength was enough to get them through the hard times. Perhaps when they first heard the word they rejoiced. They did everything they thought they should do in order to be good Christians. Unfortunately, they did not develop a trust in God.

The seed which fell among the thorns is those who have heard the Word of God, but as they go on their way, they are choked with worries, wealth, and the pleasures of life; and they brought no fruit to maturity.

These people's hearts are entirely devoted to the fleeting material things of this life. The pleasures of this world draw them away from serving God. They may appear to be serving God, but in their hearts they are seeking the wealth of this world which they feel will bring them happiness.

Jesus did not condemn us worrying, our having wealth, or the pleasures of life, but condemned allowing these things to choke God out of our lives.

Let us not then blame these things, but instead blame the corrupt mind. For it is possible to be rich and not to be deceived; and to be in this world, and not to be choked with its cares.

These people may be very active in the church, but it is only a performance put on to gain the approval of others. The moment they leave the Liturgy they forget what they were taught and begin acting like all the other people of the world. If they are criticized for being Christians, they don't hesitate to deny that God has any place in their lives.

And finally those who are like the ones where the seed fell on good soil. They hear the word of God and they hold fast to it and it grows in their hearts and they bring forth fruit with great abundance.

They eagerly receive the words of instruction and hold on to them, not letting the cares of this world or the temptations of this world tear the truth from their hearts. They recognize that this life is fleeting and commit themselves entirely to following the Word of God.

It is critical that we develop deep roots in our lives as Christians. In another place, Jesus talked about a vine. Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower... remain in me and I in you. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remains in the vine, so you also unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches."

The vine has to have roots if it is to bear fruit. If there are no roots, then there is no fruit, because without roots there is no life.

How easy is it to forget the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control." (Gal. 5:22-23) Fruit can only grow on the tree that is rooted and grounded in the Holy Spirit.

We have been chosen by God to go and bear fruit for Him (John 15:16). But this fruit can grow in our lives only if we are rooted in Christ through faith, prayer and the Eucharist.

At our baptism, the disease infested roots of our sinful nature were amputated by God's grace. A new, clean, disease free, sin free nature was implanted in us. We "put on Christ" as St. Paul says and were "rooted in him." Once you accept Jesus as Lord says Paul, sink your roots in Him and build your life on Him. Have solid faith in Him and let your life overflow with thanksgiving (Col. 2:16).

At the end of His explanation to the apostles concerning the meaning of the parable, the Lord cried "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

We have two types of ears: the outer ear and the inner ear, the physical ear and a spiritual ear, the ear of the mind and the ear of the heart. With our inner or spiritual ear, we listen to God's word not only with the mind but also with the heart.

One of the greatest compliments we can pay another person is to listen to that person. To listen is to show that you care, that you love.

If we listen to God, His voice will tell us to listen in love to the hurts of His people. So many people are hurting, and often they try to tell us where the pain is. But we cannot help them unless we hear them and are sensitive to their needs.

Can we hear the alcoholic trying to tell us where his pain is? Can we hear the drug addict trying to tell us where he is hurting?

Can we hear the lonely teenager who somehow feels he doesn't fit into this world?

Can we hear the older person who feels the world has rushed by him, leaving him lonely and unneeded?

They all have pain. They're all hurting. Can we hear them when they tell us, often in elusive and indirect language, where they are hurting? Are we listening?

The great art of conversation is not talking; it is listening to the other person. When a person confides in you, he usually doesn't want advice. He wants somebody to understand and care about his troubles.

When you can't do anything, as when a person is grieving over the death of a loved one, listening requires a willingness to suffer silently with the grieving friend, accepting not only the reality but also the insolubility of his problem.

God is not asking us to do what He Himself does not do, for He is the Great Listener. As God listens to us so we are called to listen to Him.

God is looking for ears that will listen. Life's great purpose is to obey the voice of the Father which says to us as He points to Jesus: "This is my beloved Son: listen to Him."

But, how can I listen to God?

To listen means to be alert, open, quiet. God speaks to us in many ways: in the beauty of His world, in the pain of life, in the comfort others offer, in their call for help, in his Holy Bible, and in the songs of the services of the church as well as many other ways.

We listen for His guidance; We listen for Him to tell us where we fit into His plan of things. We listen for clues as to how we can make the world around us a better place. We listen so we will know what it means to be a bearer of divine love and be fruitful.

As St. Paul said in his epistle today:

“Let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful”.

And Jesus said:

“hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

If we are to be fruitful, we must be patient and listen to what our Lord is telling us and serve Him faithfully.

Through the prayers of the Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on us.