

## READINGS AND REFLECTION FOR THE 15<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(from the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference.  
<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/readings/?feature=sunday>)

### FIRST READING - FROM THE PROPHET ISAIAH 55:10 - 11

A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah 55:10-11  
*The rain makes the earth give growth.*

Thus says the Lord:

As the rain and the snow come down from the heavens  
and do not return without watering the earth,  
making it yield and giving growth  
to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating,  
so the word that goes from my mouth  
does not return to me empty,  
without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.



The Word of the Lord.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM FROM PSALM 64

**RESPONSE: *SOME SEED FELL INTO RICH SOIL AND PRODUCED ITS CROP.***

You care for the earth, give it water, you fill it with riches.  
Your river in heaven brims over to provide its grain.

***SOME SEED FELL INTO RICH SOIL AND PRODUCED ITS CROP.***

Thus you provide for the earth; you drench its furrows,  
you level it, soften it with showers, you bless its growth.

***SOME SEED FELL INTO RICH SOIL AND PRODUCED ITS CROP.***

You crown the year with your goodness.

Abundance flows in your steps, in the pastures of the wilderness it flows.

***SOME SEED FELL INTO RICH SOIL AND PRODUCED ITS CROP.***

The hills are girded with joy, the meadows covered with flocks,  
the valleys are decked with wheat. They shout for joy, yes, they sing!

***SOME SEED FELL INTO RICH SOIL AND PRODUCED ITS CROP.***

## A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE ROMANS 8: 18-23

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Romans

8:18-23

*The whole creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal his sons.*



Brothers and sisters:

I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory, as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us. The whole creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal his sons. It was not for any fault on the part of creation that it was made unable to attain its purpose, it was made so by God; but creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God. From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free.

The Word of the Lord.

The seed is the word of God, Christ is the sower.  
All who come to him will have life forever.

## A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 13:1-23

*A sower went out to sow.*

Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the beach, and he told them many things in parables.



He said, 'Imagine a sower going out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, birds came and ate them up. Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up straight away. However, there was no depth of earth. As soon as the sun rose, they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away.

Others fell among thorns which grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Listen, anyone who has ears!

Then the disciples went up to him and asked, 'Why do you talk to them in parables?' 'Because' he replied 'the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are revealed to you, but they are not revealed to them. For anyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. The reason I talk to them in parables is that they look without seeing and listen without hearing or understanding. So in their case this prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled:

You will listen and listen again, but not understand,  
see and see again, but not perceive.

For the heart of this nation has grown coarse,  
their ears are dull of hearing, and they have shut their eyes,  
for fear they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears,  
understand with their heart, and be converted and be healed by me.

'But happy are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear!  
I tell you solemnly, many prophets and holy men longed to see what you see,  
and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.

'You, therefore, are to hear the parable of the sower.

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom without understanding, the evil one comes and carries off what was sown in his heart: this is the man who received the seed on the edge of the path.

The one who received it on patches of rock is the man who hears the word and welcomes it at once with joy. But he has no root in him, he does not last; let some trial come, or some persecution on account of the word, and he falls away at once.

The one who received the seed in thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this world and the lure of riches choke the word and so he produces nothing.

And the one who received the seed in rich soil is the man who hears the word and understands it; he is the one who yields a harvest and produces now a hundredfold, now sixty, now thirty.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

## REFLECTION

*It takes time to build castles!* (from Ireland) *Time is not a line but a series of now-points.* (a Zen proverb). *Every seed knows its time!* (from Russia)

Parables are imaginative earthly stories with a heavenly meaning to which we all can respond personally just as we are. The Gospel's Parable presents Jesus narrating how a seed might respond where it is sown by a farmer. He was teaching about how we might respond to the Word of God. This parable has a 'punch line': "Listen, anyone who has ears!"

Jesus' teaching was for his disciples and his adversaries, and for us. Perhaps he was encouraging his disciples in their own self-awareness and in the face of rejection by others. The more open they are to receive, the more God can reveal to them; the more God reveals to them, the more they are open to receive. On the other hand, Jesus appealed to the imagination of people with closed minds and hardened hearts, inviting them freely to a change of heart.

This parable can help us today understand how we ourselves and others can encounter and respond to the Word of God in a variety of contexts. Believing in our own righteousness, we can assume we 'know it all' about the Scriptures and act hardheartedly towards others. We can be shallow in how we embrace what is the 'latest' without seeking deeper understandings. Our lifestyles can be so crowded that we hear but don't discern.

The Word of God calls for action and transforms us. Seeds contain the potential for life unless rotten, lack essential elements or do not take hold in the ground. In fact, seeds cease to exist losing their identity as seeds so plants can grow. They cannot produce fruit themselves but their nurtured plant forms can. They become something far different and live a new kind of life.

Isaiah's people were suffering as exiles in Babylon and were tempted to lose hope. Despite no apparent progress, he encouraged them to trust in God's faithful love. Paul understood how, with all creation, we are 'groaning' under burdens – we await the full realisation of God's hope for us in Christ!

*With St Francis of Assisi, we can pray for guidance:*

O Great and Glorious God, and my Lord Jesus Christ,  
enlighten the darkness of my heart. Grant me a correct faith, a firm hope  
and a perfect charity so that in all things, with wisdom and understanding,  
I may act according to Your most holy and perfect will.