

15th Sunday of the Year A

First Reading Isaiah 55:10-11

Thus says the Lord: "Yes, 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."

Second Reading Romans 8:18-23

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.

Gospel Matthew 13:1-9

Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such 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, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up straight away, because there was no depth of earth; but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns 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!"

Meditation

In making use of parables, Jesus did not inaugurate a form of preaching new to the people of his day. The Old Testament and later rabbinic literature offer many examples of this style of communication. It was the content rather than the form of Jesus' preaching which came as a surprise. He proclaimed with authority the proximity of the kingdom of heaven and therefore the need to be converted to the Lord. Jesus does not use parables simply for the sake of adopting common parlance. Yet the images he employs do enable us to hear the message, seize its meaning, and become involved in it. Each evangelist explains in his own way the reason for the parables.

For Matthew, understanding the parables presupposes a heart open to revelation, ready to translate the word into action despite opposition and apparent defeat. At certain times everything seems to conspire to prevent us from hearing the gospel and believing in its future. For two thousand years the sower has gone out to sow and we are sometimes tempted to ask what this sowing has accomplished. Our proper response to the prodigal lavishness of God should consist in seizing the word heard and allowing it to seize us that it may bear fruit.