

## **Sexagesima Sunday**

February 20, 2022

Today marks the halfway point of our time of preparation for the Holy season of Great Lent. And we are also reminded that there are now approximately 60 days before we observe the Radiant Feast of Easter. Once again, the Church calls us to draw ourselves from the things of this world, to immerse ourselves more fully into the sacred truths of our Holy Religion, so that we might tend the inner garden of our hearts. This Sexagesima Sunday then, is a blessed opportunity to draw ever closer to the Lord Jesus, and to seek in an ever fuller way to be inwardly conformed to His Sacred Image!

In keeping with this call to cultivate the life of the soul, today's Gospel presents us with the well known, and well loved parable of the sower. Here is a teaching that is very familiar to us- we have probably heard it or read it hundreds of times, but we need to be careful that it's familiarity doesn't dull our hearts and minds to the all important message that it contains!

The Lord Jesus relates the story of a man who goes to sow seed- with the hope that that precious seed would find root, and eventually bear a rich harvest. The Lord relates that the quality and quantity of the harvest would depend upon the kind of soil that the seed fell on. Some fell by the wayside, some on rocky ground, some among thorns. In each of these soils, no growth could be expected, and yet the Lord tells of another soil-good ground, that would provide the necessary depth and life that would cause the seed to sprout and thrive.

It really isn't very difficult for us to find a spiritual application in this parable is it? The sower of course is our Lord who has come into the world to sow the seed of His Word-that life giving Word that brings life and new hope to all who will prepare their hearts to receive it. This is the Divine Word that has as its mission: the Redemption of the world -- and that includes you and I sitting here today! It is this gift of mercy that is seeking good ground, ground that is prepared to receive life and the possibility of endless growth in Holiness and Truth.

So here we are dear friends, called by the Church to prepare the soil of our hearts to receive that Word that can bring hope and joy to all! The Sower is casting His seed, and we have only to nourish that precious gift, to experience in due time the fruits of Eternal life -- both here and hereafter!

But as we consider these spiritual truths, we need to understand that this Seed of the Word will not thrive in a heart that is unprepared or negligent. Cultivating within ourselves this spiritual growth does not happen unless we are willing both to prepare, and maintain the good soil of our hearts! There is a blessed work to do, and we are challenged in today's Gospel reading to begin - to begin where, and as we are. It is an invitation to forget the things that are past and to press toward the goal of Life Everlasting! This does not mean however that we are seeking to earn our way into the Kingdom, or trying to impress the Lord of All with our spiritual attainments -- no

indeed! Rather we learn to cultivate and prepare our souls so that each of us might more fully experience the Love and Mercy of the One who has stooped down to us with such tenderness, and who longs to draw us to Himself, that we might enjoy the Eternal Vision of His Presence, and find our happiness in the Heavenly Life forever with Him in the Beauty of the Holy Trinity!

Friends, the most important thing that we have is a soul -- that part of us that lies most deeply within us, and that makes us who we really are! Our souls, are the greatest treasure that we have and so they must be guarded and nurtured with the greatest care and attention. If we squander this Blessed gift through unbelief, fear, or negligence, the effects can and will be catastrophic! But if we will understand that our first vocation as a Christian believer is to lovingly cultivate the life of our souls, then we prepare ourselves to receive in rich abundance, all of the graces and mercies that our Lord in His generosity seeks to shower upon us.

To do this, we need not be theologians; we need not be within the confines of a monastic enclosure; we don't have to be particularly wealthy or intelligent. But what is required is a Holy Intention -- a Holy intention that seeks to discover and live the Will of God in every circumstance and situation. The key to this Intention is a heart that is humble, simple, and trusting. Here is the good soil that will enable the seed of truth and grace to blossom and bring forth a rich and bountiful crop!

This Holy Work of inner cleansing and preparation is certainly not easy -- no part of the Christian Life is! There are many pitfalls and dangers both within and without, that can wound our Hearts and try to make us give up this Holy Warfare of the Soul. But if we will simply move forward one step at a time, if we will listen closely to the still small voice of the Holy Ghost, guiding and counselling us, if we will renew our intention for Holiness as often as we fall from it, a great thing will begin to happen: our souls will become ever brighter with the Divine Light of Christ!

Dear friends, I pray that none of us will refuse this work of spiritual cultivation. I pray that all of us here are secretly seeking that inner experience of living for Christ alone -- not as experts, but as humble and loving children of a Heavenly Father who holds us with such love in His Heart of Mercy and life.

In the Epistle reading today St Paul shows us what living according to that inner life of grace and trust can look like! St Paul was a man who knew more than his share of the sufferings of life. But in spite of everything, he was able to maintain that inner calm and peace, because he knew that behind everything that happened, still the Promises of God stood firm, and that he would be protected and provided for in every need. St Paul maintained his Holy Intention to live for our Blessed Lord, even in the midst of great affliction and distress, and so can each of us friends, if we will simply ask Him to supply all that we stand in need of from moment to moment.

Our Lord in today's parable sets before us some very important spiritual principles, principles that are given to us for the eternal good of our souls. As we are drawing closer to the healing

time of Lent, may each of us resolve by God's Grace to use these next weeks for the holy work of preparing our hearts for the Blessed reign of Christ! May each of us find our true joy in tending the garden of our hearts, so that Christ, in all His Glory, Grace and Mercy becomes to us what He truly is-our Lord and Saviour-the one who is the fairest of all and who seeks the good soil of our hearts in which to dwell eternally!

May this be true for all of us!

Glory be to God for All Things! AMEN