

## Homily for 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year

When I take my daily walk I am struck by how green and alive everything looks, and how beautiful the birdsong sounds, all of which brings a cheer to my heart because it is nature at its best. The things of nature are at the heart of today's scripture with the image of sowing seeds on the one hand and the whole of creation giving birth on the other. And creation and the nature are tied in with the word of God.

Our forebears believed in God's creative word we only have to go to the first story of creation in the book of Genesis to read that when God said something, it happened, e.g. 'let there be light and there was light...' In the present climate we would also do well to remember that in the second story of creation God reminded human beings that they were to be stewards of creation. Never in the history of humankind have we needed to hear this because we have it in our power to so abuse creation that there will be nothing left for future generations. We only have to think of deforestation, irresponsible mining, the unnecessary and wasteful use of fossil fuels, or the oceans being full of our waste often from single use plastic. Despite a welcome use of recycling there is still a growth in land fill rubbish sites. So one of the things the word of God is inviting to reflect on today is the beauty of creation from a tiny seed to the great act of giving birth, human, animal, reptile, bird, plant and the importance of the decisions we make about how we use nature's resources.

We could stop there, but there is another aspect to the readings, namely the effectiveness of God's word. Isaiah in our first very short reading makes a really bold statement linking God's word with nature – Just as rain and snow water the earth to allow crops to grow, so God's word does not return empty without carrying out God's will and succeeding what it was meant to do. This reading is given to prepare us to hear the first of Jesus' parables in Matthew's gospel, namely the parable of the sower and the seed. As we know Jesus often used nature to tell a story and make a point, and his listeners, many of whom would have been farmers, would readily understand this story. There is a recklessness in the scattering of the seed rather than careful ploughing and planting, with the result that much of it would never germinate, but some did with amazing results yielding a crop the farmer would not believe possible.

But there is more to the parable than this and the Gospel Acclamation gives us the clue, the seed is the word of God and the sower is Jesus. So for us the parable is asking how receptive are we to the word of God and we know we are sometimes more open than at other times. We can be almost completely deaf, or only half listening and not bothering. Or at other times initially enthusiastic until it calls us to change and we don't want to. And then there are times when we hear and respond in faith both generously and effectively, yielding a rich harvest, signs of which are caring for creation by the choices we make, having a concern for others, especially those in most need, and speaking out on behalf of the voiceless and the oppressed.

## Bidding Prayers for the 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday 2020

Celebrant:

The sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed to us. With patient hope we await the dawning of God's Kingdom.

Reader:

For all parents, teachers and preachers – that they may help to sow the seeds of faith in the hearts of all who listen, especially the young.

Lord in your mercy

For all those responsible for building community – that they may ensure the just treatment of all.

Lord in your mercy

For all who work on the land to produce food for our nutrition and enjoyment – that their labour will be rewarded and that together we will always give thanks for the fruits of the earth.

Lord in your mercy

For all who are entrapped by slavery of any kind, especially those burdened by addiction of any kind – that they may find freedom and peace.

Lord in your mercy

For all victims of violence, accident, natural disasters and the covid-19 pandemic and Margaret Gowdrige, Jack Rodgers, Peter Halliwell, Ann Taylor, Brian Knox, Margaret Booth and Josephine Uttley whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Heavenly God, yours is the kingdom of peace and joy. Your son sows seeds of faith in our hearts and the Holy Spirit helps them grow. May our faith work wonders in your world and help us to wait in joyful expectation for the coming of your Kingdom in its fullness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen