

## Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020

My beloved brothers and sisters, a good gardener knows that if their garden is going to produce a good and healthy harvest, that the soil must be thoroughly prepared beforehand. The ratio of organic material and sand and humus as well as the acidity must all be in proper balance. Then, once the soil is properly prepared, it must also be tended, properly watered and weeded, and in many cases, the garden plants protected with fencing and insecticides. It takes a lot of work!

In the same way, Jesus uses the parable we have just heard to remind us how carefully we must prepare the heart to receive the good seed of the gospel- that it must be properly tended and nourished in order for the life of the Holy Spirit to thrive within us! There is no shortage of the potential life in the seed; only a shortage of depth and readiness for the seed!

I am deeply concerned during this time, that even before the pandemic and the closure of normal Sacramental activity, CCD, spiritual exercises, and all the like, that we were seeing a rapid and tremendous departure of Catholics from the Church. There has been a great diminishment of faith and faithful practice within the Western World. I am deeply concerned that many people who were tenuous at best in the practice of their faith before the pandemic, once we have fully opened to normal services, will simply stop coming all together! This is not only happening within the Catholic Church, it is happening in all of the Churches! What is needed, is a wholesale re-evangelization that first begins with us, and then reaches out to our brothers and sisters who have fallen away!

Jesus reminds us of the dangers to our faith, when the soil of our lives is shallow, rocky, or fraught with weeds: (our worldly preoccupation of materialism over the care of our spiritual life, and the impact of secularism and humanism over the values of the Gospel- the Word of Eternal Life and the values of the Sacramental Church He has entrusted to us! Sooner or later, the plants will die!

On the other hand, when we practice the life of the Spirit by prayer and by Sacraments, by continuing to learn about our Catholic faith, by attending to the

weeds in our lives by the Sacrament of Confession, by seeking what is authentic and life-giving, by putting God first in our lives, our families and neighbors second, by allowing the Lord to embrace us in His living Word by learning about the gospels and meditating upon them, by spending time with the Living Jesus before the Blessed Sacrament, by the daily prayer of the Rosary, by living lives of charity and self-denial, we will begin to experience the Life of God in our lives and families and the Spirit of Jesus will make us thrive and reap a huge harvest of goodness for ourselves and for others!