Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 12, 2020

A sower went out to sow.
Some seed fell on the path . . . some fell on rocky ground.
. . . Some seed fell among thorns.
. . . But some fell on rich soil, and produced fruit.

Matthew 13:3, 4, 5, 7, 8

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Saint Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680)

July 14

Though the New York State Thruway runs close by the North American Martyrs' Shrine, traffic's roar never pierces the peace enveloping Auriesville—Ossernon to Native Americans—in the lovely Mohawk Valley, where Kateri Tekakwitha was born barely ten years after the martyrdom of Isaac Jogues and his Jesuit and lay companions. Daughter of a Christian Algonquin mother and non-Christian Mohawk chief, Kateri's parents died in a smallpox epidemic widely blamed on the missionaries. Moreover, many Native Americans had experienced exploitation at the hands of "Christian" traders and trappers, further discrediting the faith Kateri embraced in baptism, then pledged to live even more intensely in vowed virginity. Misunderstanding led to harassment, prompting her move to a Christian village farther north along the Saint Lawrence River. Despite this, Kateri's faith remained undaunted, her selfless charity undiminished. Both before and after her death at twenty-four, this young "Lily of the Mohawks" drew countless converts to Christ by the fragrance of her goodness. Through us, does "the aroma of Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:15), attract others to the beauty of his gospel?

—Peter Scagnelli, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

God's Words.

Each day we are bombarded with thousands of words. From the moment our clock radios click on in the morning, until the last moment of the day when the television is turned off or someone bids us "good-night," our life is filled with words. Some words that we hear bring news that leaves us feeling low. Some words lift our spirits. Many of the words we hear are trying to get us to buy something. Some words are hurtful. Today the Church focuses our attention on hearing the word of God. Are God's words just more of the same—part of the endless stream of words that flow into our ears each day? The challenge today is to allow God's word to inspire us in new ways so that our outlook and attitudes align themselves more closely with the heart and mind of Christ Jesus.

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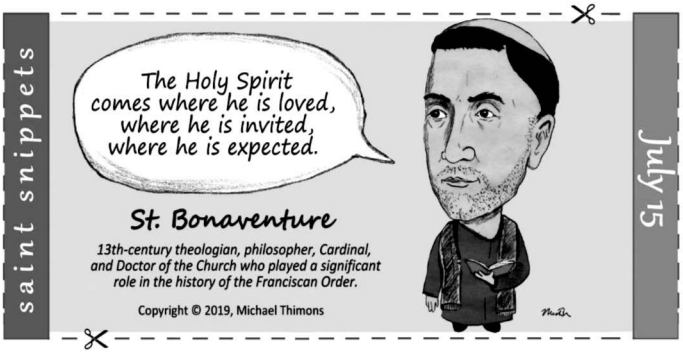
Readings for the Week

Monday:	Is 1:10-17; Ps 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21, 23; Mt 10:34 — 11:1
Tuesday:	Is 7:1-9; Ps 48:2-8; Mt 11:20-24
Wednesday:	Is 10:5-7, 13b-16; Ps 94:5-10, 14-15; Mt 11:25-27
Thursday:	Is 26:7-9, 12, 16-19; Ps 102:13-14ab, 15-21; Mt 11:28-30
Friday:	Is 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8; Is 38:10-12abcd, 16; Mt 12:1-8
Saturday:	Mi 2:1-5; Ps 10:1-4, 7-8, 14; Mt 12:14-21
Sunday:	Wis 12:13, 16-19; Ps 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16; Rom 8:26-27; Mt 13:24-43 [24-30]

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Monday:	St. Henry
Tuesday:	St. Kateri Tekakwitha
Wednesday:	St. Bonaventure
Thursday:	Our Lady of Mount Carmel
Saturday:	St. Camillus de Lellis; Blessed Virgin Mary



Today's Readings

First Reading — My word will achieve the end for which it was sent (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Psalm — The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest (Psalm 65).

Second Reading — We, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves awaiting the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:18-23).

Gospel — Some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit (Matthew 13:1-23 [1-9]).

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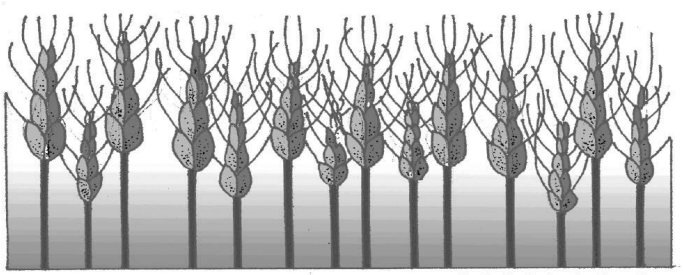

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Fifteenth Sunday
In Ordinary Time
July 12, 2020

You have crowned the year with your bounty,
and your paths overflow with a rich harvest.

—Psalm 65:12

Treasures From Our Tradition

Charlemagne, crowned Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day, 800, had a major interest in shaping the worship life of the church, and began a long period of reform and regulation. We owe many confirmation policies and practices to his rule. A baptized person was required to be confirmed as soon as the bishop's presence made it possible. Priests were expected to do their best in seeing to it that a newly-baptized child received the Eucharist. One twelfth-century ritual insists that if the child is not yet capable of eating or drinking, then the priest might give him or her some of the Precious Blood on a leaf or a finger.

Despite the best efforts of the Empire to hold liturgical life together, the rules were not always lived out with great beauty. St. Richard of Chichester of thirteenth-century England, for example, was canonized for his holy life as a bishop. One of the remarkable signs of his sanctity was his willingness to climb down from his horse to confirm "merely baptized" layfolk who crossed his path! This praiseworthy practice points a finger of blame at less zealous bishops, whose casual attitudes revealed a sacrament in need of rescue.

—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Here in the middle of summer, many people grow vegetable and flower gardens, or appreciate the work of others by buying produce from roadside stands and farmer's markets. All our readings today embrace one of God's smallest but most common miracles as a metaphor: the seed and its cycle, and all that it stands for. Isaiah reminds us that just as God waters the earth and cares for it so that seeds may grow, so the Word of God will come and not return to God until it has borne fruit. Psalm 65 describes the cycle of growth and personifies fields that "shout for joy." Romans has "creation groaning in labor pains" as it waits for its seed to come to fruition, redemption of the body. Similarly, Jesus teaches the crowds by using the parable of the sower and the seed.

Growth Requires Patience

Every child in school has experienced the excitement of growing a simple bean seed planted in a paper cup or watched a time lapse video of the growth process. We watch this miracle sprout in a matter of days, and marvel at the whole process. A seed must be planted and die to itself in order to create a new life. Then it must be fertilized and watered and cared for. But most importantly, one must be patient and wait. Seeds take a certain amount of time to develop and may require being dormant for a while. Similarly, a human baby takes nine months to grow from the time the seed is fertilized.

But no matter what we do, and how well we do it, not all seeds will yield fruit. Sometimes the conditions are just not right to allow it. Not all pregnancies go full term. Farmers know the pain of a drought year, or storms that ruin a crop before it can be harvested. Diseases and blight and other things can take hold.

Some Will Be Lost

Growing up in the Western states, beautiful fields of wheat and beans were a common sight for me, but I did not fully understand this parable until going to the Holy Land and seeing the rocky ground that Jesus spoke of. This was an "aha" moment, as I witnessed what a miracle it was when something had the strength and tenacity to grow among the crags despite the arid conditions. What a sign of faith and trust and hope even to plant crops there, knowing that some would be lost! It would seem easier to write them all off, or even less work not to plant them at all.

Jesus could do that to us, but he has not. He has faith and trust that a number of the seeds planted in us will bear great fruit. They will not wither and fade away, but will produce fruit, a hundred-, or sixty- or thirty-fold. And his faith in us gives us hope.

Today's Readings: Is 55:10–11; Ps 65:10, 11, 12–13, 14; Rom 8:18–23; Mt 13:1–23 [1–9]

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