

# Read

Isaiah 55:10-11

Psalm 65:10, 11,  
12-13, 14

Romans 8:18-23

Matthew 13:1-23 or 13:1-9

## LIVING THE WORD

### Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 12, 2020



#### REFLECTION

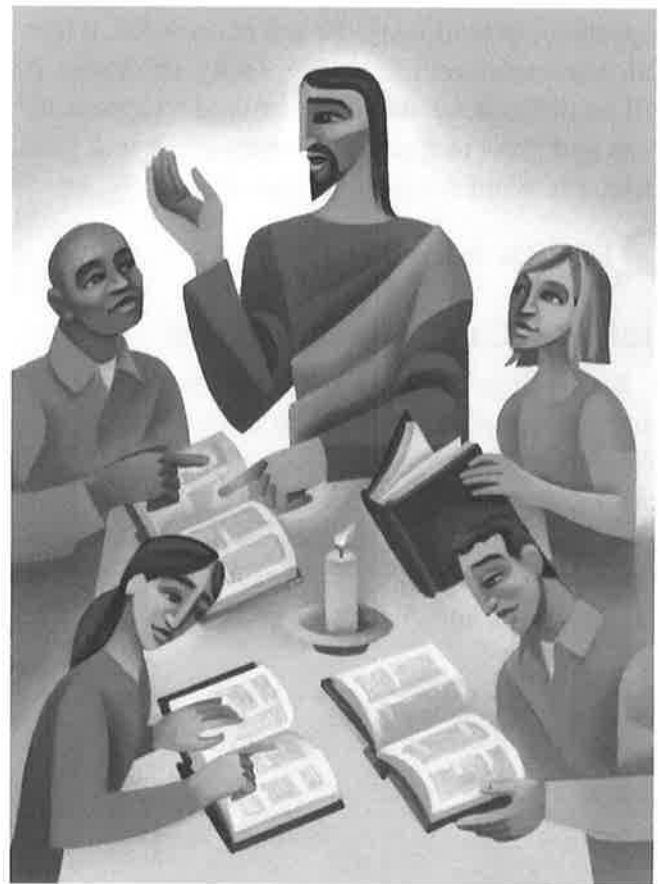
Jesus is the master teacher. Like any good teacher, Jesus knows how to reach his students in ways that are both engaging and thought-provoking. In today's Gospel, Jesus uses his signature teaching style for the first time—the parable. A parable is literary device that uses ordinary, everyday people, objects and situations to represent a greater reality. Jesus uses the image of a sower and seeds to help his disciples understand what happens when people encounter the living God. Some entirely ignore the encounter, some listen for a while before going back their former ways, and some allow God to continually grow within them, shaping all aspects of their lives. While this image, and the images of all parables are helpful in understand what Jesus was saying, parables in themselves do not make Jesus the master teacher.

Jesus is the master teacher because he invites his followers to think about what he says. Rather than requiring rote memorization or some sort of blind acceptance, Jesus presents information in such a way that requires processing and internalization. This is how the best teachers teach. Instead of reciting facts, good teachers invite students to think for themselves. In his parables and throughout his entire public ministry Jesus invites us to think for ourselves.



#### ACTION

What are some of the characteristics of one of your favorite teachers? What makes them so successful in the classroom? Why do you acknowledge that person as a good educator? Take some time and pray for that teacher, thanking God for the gifts they share. Then, take a moment to personally thank that teacher for helping you grow as a student and person.



#### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Which element of today's parable most resonates with you?
- ❖ How would you describe your faith life today?



July 12, 2020

# FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## LECTIONARY #103A

Isaiah 55:10-11

Psalms 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14

Romans 8:18-23

Matthew 13:1-23 or 13:1-9

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

The parable of the sowing of seeds conveys the importance of tending to the soil of one's life. If this soil, one's spiritual life, is dry, rocky, or thorny, it will be difficult for the Word of God to sprout its roots and grow to fruition. If one's soil is well prepared, the Word can grow abundantly.

**Q FOCUS:** *To tend the soil.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

St. Kateri Tekakwitha is a Native American saint who was recently canonized, in 2012. We celebrate her memorial on Tuesday, July 14. Moved by the teaching of Jesuit missionaries who reached out to her people, Kateri was baptized when she was nineteen years old. Her spiritual practices focused on fasting, prayer, and charity.

## Church Teaching Connection

"This parable speaks to each of us today . . . it reminds us that we are the land where the Lord tirelessly throws the seed of his word and his love. What is our disposition when we receive it? How is our heart? . . . It's up to us to become good soil . . ." (Pope Francis, Angelus Address, 13 July 2014).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel

Matthew 13:1-9

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil and

produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear.”

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

► **Have you ever been in the middle of a huge crowd somewhere in which you could hardly move?**

Maybe you've attended a festival or a concert in which there were hundreds or even thousands of people crammed in immediately around you. Perhaps you've been to an extremely busy restaurant with family and have spent time waiting for a table. Or maybe you've been to a sporting event where the crowds have turned out in droves to cheer on the home team.

When we encounter Jesus in today's Gospel, we find him going out from a house and heading down to the seashore. There, a very large number of people gather around him.

► **Why do you think that so many people turned out to be near Jesus on that day?**

Imagine that you were amongst the crowd.

► **How would your anticipation of hearing this teacher have felt like?**

► **What type of message would you have hoped to hear if you were present that day?**

Matthew's account of the story states that the crowds that were gathered around Jesus were extremely large in number. There were so many people that Jesus felt the need to have a bit more space. So, he got into a boat and pushed off a bit from the edge of the water so that he could have a bit of space in order to share his message.

► **What teaching method did Jesus utilize when he settled into his floating pulpit?**

He turned to his favorite teaching technique: sharing parables.

► **What do you remember about parables?**

Parables are usually short stories that are allegorical in nature and have meaning to them that are meant to convey a deeper truth to those who hear it. Jesus loved to share parables to help people understand what his truth was that he was sharing with them.

Today's parable centers upon an image of the sowing of seeds. The one who was sowing the seeds in the story spread them out in different locations with different surfaces upon which the seeds land. Some land on the path where hungry birds quickly scoop them up. Others land on rocky ground while some land upon thorny bushes. The last grouping of seeds land on very rich soil and, as a result, are able to produce good fruit. Visualize each of these types of surfaces.

► **What are the specific characteristics of each that you can identify?**

► **Why do some landing places give opportunity for a plant to grow while others are doomed from the start?**

► **What type of message do you think Jesus is trying to get at by sharing this particular parable?**

A key piece of Jesus' sharing of this tale can be found in the statement he makes at the very end of the parable. "Whoever has ears ought to hear" (Matthew 13:9). This message is for everyone and it concerns how we prepare the soil of our lives for receiving the seeds sown, namely, the message, the Good News, that Jesus is sharing with us.

► **How might you be more attentive to preparing the soil of your life so that it can be a rich and fertile garden patch for Jesus' word to grow roots and produce good fruit in your life?**

## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 230.

**Which of the landing places for the seed do you feel your life is for receiving the Word of God?**

**What steps might you take to till the ground of your life so that it becomes more fertile for receiving Jesus?**

## Act on the Word

### Four Types of Landing Ground for Faith

*In order to conduct this activity, you will need either four large sheets of newsprint or a large board with four divided columns. You will also need appropriate writing tools. The youth will also either need journals or individual sheets of paper and their own writing utensils for their individual reflection.*

Gather the group of young people together and invite a volunteer to read today's Gospel reading again (unless you just recently read it). Invite another volunteer to go to the newsprint or board with a pen or marker and write at the top of each section the four types of ground found in the parable, along with the particular relationship with faith that each type of ground has. Solicit assistance from the rest of the group to identify these four. You should end up with groupings along the lines of this: "Hard Path" (difficult for faith to take hold from the start); "Shallow Rocky Ground" (faith can wither away easily); "Patch of Thorns" (faith is unable to be shared with others); and "Good, Fertile Ground" (faith is able to grow and be shared with others).

Invite the youth to look at these four groupings of types of ground and their respective impacts upon the potential for a life of faith. Ask them to

think about examples of what it is like to be a teenager in the twenty-first century. Invite them to spend sometime journaling about their reality of being a teenager in today's world, and invite them to try and classify each of these aspects within one of the four classifications. Once everyone has had the opportunity to spend some individual time journaling, they can then go to the board or newsprint to write down some of their responses. After all have had the chance to write down their answers for the group to see, have some time discussing what it is that they have come up with. Note the various challenges that they face to live a life of faith. What are some things that they are challenged with in order to live the life that God wants for them? What are the aspects of their lives which help to nourish their spiritual lives, which help to cultivate a fertile soil for faith to truly grow and be shared. Note the similarities and the differences that they have discerned. Conclude with a prayer asking Jesus to help them to cultivate well healthy soil which will allow their faith lives to blossom and prosper.

### Closing Prayer

*God of earth and sky,  
you brought forth all life by your great love.  
You offer growth and life to every person.  
May we be rich soil for that growth,  
rejoicing in every flower  
and every fruit that gives you glory.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

### For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*