

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR A

THEME: **THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD**

Today's readings are about the transforming power of the word of God. The parable of the sower challenges us to listen carefully to the word of God, to be open to it, and to allow our lives to be shaped by its power. It reminds us that our reception of God's Word is determined by the condition of our heart.

In the first reading, Isaiah consoles the Jewish slaves in Babylon, assuring them that, like rain and snow which water the earth so that seeds may sprout and grow, God's word will accomplish its purpose, in this case by returning the exiles to their homes in peace as God promised. In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that just as seeds must fall into the earth and die to produce abundant crop, the pain and sufferings God permits in our lives will help our redemption. St. Paul wants us to wait for our eternal reward, while we continue sowing the word of God diligently and suffering for the Lord, as he did.

Our Gospel reading teaches us that the word of God is the seed, and our hearts and minds are the soil. The fruitfulness of the Word of God sown in our life depends on how fully we willingly accept and respond to it. The yield arising from the positive response will be abundant beyond all imagining. The parable tells us to do our part by preparing fertile soil in our hearts in which the word of God can germinate, grow, and yield 30-, 60, or 100-fold.

My dear friends in Christ, we need to assess our use of the word of God. We need to read the word of God every day, starting with a prayer to the Holy Spirit for the gifts of attentive reading and the ability and willingness to apply the message we receive to our daily living. When we listen to the word of God as read and preached in the Church during the Holy Mass, we need to pay full attention to the message given by God who uses the priest as his instrument. We also need to ask God's special grace to remove all types of blocks, like laziness, anxiety, worries, and the burden of sins, any of which can prevent the word of God from influencing and transforming our lives.

We need to keep our spiritual soil fertile and prepared for the word of God. We need to keep our hearts open to the word of God instead of closing it with pride, prejudice, fear, or laziness. We have to remove from our hearts the weeds like evil habits and addictions, evil tendencies, hatred, jealousy, fear, and greed.

We should not allow the trials and tribulations of this world, the cares of this world, our ambitions, or our desires for worldly success and happiness to choke out the messages that God gives us through his word.