15th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Cycle A

 Isaiah 55: 10-11; Romans 8: 18-23; Matthew 113: 1-23

July 12/13, 2014

Are you a planter of seeds or an up-rooter of weeds? Are you someone who cheerfully spreads God’s word of truth and love and presence, or are you someone who is always sullenly trying to yank and tug at the weeds of life, angry that they keep springing up? Do you live in faith and the sure knowledge that God’s word and his kingdom and his truth will flourish and win the day, or are you a pessimist who sees only the weeds of life and complains about them? When you look at yourself, what do you see?

Jesus tells us, “Plant the seed!” Plant it now. Plant it tomorrow. Plant it the day after. Plant the seed! Keep planting. Keep planting the seed even if the soil may not seem fertile. Keep planting. Don’t stop…. Keep planting.

The seed will bear fruit as God has promised. We heard it in the first reading, how the rain and snow will not return to heaven until it has fertilized and done its job. We heard it in the second reading when Paul essentially said, “Don’t fret about life’s sufferings because the glory that follows is so much greater.”

I suppose we can say to paraphrase a famous line from the movie, *Field of Dreams, “If you plant it, they will come.”*

You must plant the seed on all sorts of soil. You must spread God’s word even to hard hearts, hearts preoccupied by worldly worries, hearts that lack maturity or depth. Even if the soil, the hearer of the word, seems unreceptive or distracted, spread the word anyway, plant the seed. It will bear the fruit it is meant to bear.

What does this mean for us in our daily lives?

 It means we must never lose faith; we must never lose hope. Even if you are overwhelmed by worries and problems, know that God is planting his seed in your life, on your soil. Let him penetrate your hearts.

It means even if a loved one, perhaps a son or a daughter, seems like hardened soil that rejects the seed, the word of truth, rejects their faith and yours, keep sowing the seed anyway, that word of truth. Never lose hope in speaking the truth. Never lose hope in your son or daughter.

It means even if at one time in your life you were excited about your faith, about God and about the Church, and for whatever reason you lost that enthusiasm, you lost that initial excitement, maybe even lost the faith because of a hurt, or a scandal, or the sinful behavior of so-called believers, don’t be afraid to listen again, to welcome again, to receive again the seed of God’s word that the Church teaches, plants, and scatters. Your enthusiasm, your faith will return. God promises it.

My friends, at every moment of every day, wherever you are at, Jesus is putting his hand in the seed sack and scattering it in front of you and behind you. Everywhere in this world of ours bishops, priests, and deacons are preaching the word, scattering the seed. All throughout the world, mothers and fathers, catechists and teachers, are instructing children in the ways of God. They too are sowing the seed.

So must I. So must you. As a deacon, I really have no choice, if I want to get to heaven. When a deacon is ordained, the bishop hands him the Book of the Gospels and tells him that now he must go out and proclaim that Gospel, preach the Word, to all peoples for a deacon is a herald of the Gospel. I cannot help but preach and teach, to plant the seed of faith. I will be judged on the last day by Jesus on how committed I have been in doing so. You too, in a different way, must plant the seeds of faith for you have been baptized and have received the Holy Spirit. It is your vocation to plant the seed by how you live and what you say.

Many will have hard hearts. Many will be distracted and preoccupied by other things. Some who show promise at first will disappoint you later. We have all experienced that haven’t we? But we, nonetheless, must speak the word of truth and love, God’s holy seed, to them too. Always in hope, always with love, always believing that God’s promise will be fulfilled that his seed will bear fruit.

St. Francis of Assisi said that we must always proclaim God’s word without ceasing for a second. He literally meant this. He also said that most of us will plant that seed not by words, but by example, by the way we live our lives.

We must speak the truth, not lies. We must live in justice, not selfishness. We must greet each other with a smile, not a frown. We must reverence the name of Jesus and God, and do not profane that name. We must live chastely in an unchaste world. We must make our faith visible by displaying a crucifix in our homes. We can carry a rosary with us and pray it. We can go to confession each month. We must be faithful to our husband or wife. We must respect our parents and grandparents. If we do these things, we are sowing the seed of truth, and life, and love in our world.

So I ask you again, as I did at the beginning: “Are you a planter of seeds, or do you just complain of the weeds?”

We must plant the good seed. God demands it.