

Homily 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) 2026

'We, like Jesus, are called to be humble servants of one another. We must also remember that the first step to holiness is the humble acknowledgement of our sinfulness before God.' (Don Giuseppe)

In reading today's Liturgy of The Word my thoughts turned to my philosophy studies almost 50 years ago. The "ornate garden" analogy is an (teleological) argument for the existence of God. It suggests that just as an elaborate, carefully arranged garden naturally leads us to infer a gardener, the complexity and order of the universe point to a divine designer. The design argument goes like this: you come across an exquisitely designed garden with symmetrical flower beds, sculpted hedges, fountains, and winding paths; you would not reasonably conclude that it came about through chance; you would infer the existence of an intelligent gardener or landscape architect. Likewise, the universe exhibits intricate order, complexity, and apparent purpose and therefore, the reasonable explanation is that the universe too has an intelligent designer, God.

Isaiah in today's First Reading uses the analogy of the readiness of the created earth to produce fruit and the necessity of rain to water and give life. All is in place for our survival as human beings. The prophet uses the analogy to also emphasise that all is in place for God's Word to likewise fall on the earth and produce fruit, never returning to Him without producing a bountiful harvest.

Jesus, the Word Incarnate inspired by The Holy Spirit, reinforces this teaching of Isaiah but with some qualifications. God's Word is like the seed a farmer sows in a field. However, not all the seed fall on the fertile soil, which has been carefully prepared for a bumper crop. Some seed falls on the path and is trodden underfoot. Other seeds fall on rocks and don't take root. Still others fall among thorns and are choked. It is only those seeds which fall on the fertile soil which produce fruit in plenty. Jesus himself explains the parable, 'When anyone hears the word and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, but when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word. As for what was sown on good soil, are those who hear the word, understand and acts on it. They indeed bear fruit.'

The key message of the parable is we must ready and prepare ourselves to hear God's Word: avoiding the temptations of evil; standing firm in faith when faced with suffering, persecution and pain; being aware of the dangers of riches and material gain and avoiding the lure of status and power. Like the tax-collector, in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, we must accept our poverty before God, admit our sinfulness before our Creator and humbly beat our breast accepting our weakness as human beings. Only then can God's Word truly produce fruit in abundance as we hear it, take it to ourselves and act upon it.

How stunningly beautiful is that!