

**First reading Isaiah 55:10-11**

**'The rain makes the earth bring forth and sprout.'**

Thus says the Lord:

'For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.'

**Responsorial Psalm 65(64): 10-14 R Luke 8:8**

***Some seed fell into good soil and yielded its fruit.***

You visit the earth, give it water;  
you fill it with riches.  
God's ever-flowing river brims over  
to prepare the grain.

And thus you prepare it:  
you drench its furrows;  
you level it, soften it with showers;  
you bless its growth.

You crown the year with your bounty.  
Abundance flows in your pathways;  
in pastures of the desert it flows.  
The hills are girded with joy.

The meadows clothed with flocks.  
The valleys are decked with wheat.  
They shout for joy; yes, they sing!

**Second reading Romans 8: 18-23**

**'The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.'**

Brothers and Sisters: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption, and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

**Gospel Acclamation**

**Alleluia, alleluia.** The seed is the word of God, Christ the sower; all who find him will live for ever. **Alleluia.**

**Gospel Matthew 13: 1-23**

**'A sower went out to sow.'**

At that time: Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd

stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.'

Then the disciples came and said to him, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?' And he answered them, 'To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.'

'Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom 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, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and 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, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.'

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**Feast days this week**

**Monday 13th July: St Henry**

**Tuesday 14th July: St Camillus of Lellis**

**Wednesday 15th July: St Bonaventure**

**Thursday 16th July: Our Lady of Mount Carmel**

**Saturday 18th July: Memorial of the Blessed**

**Virgin Mary**

**The Power of the Word**

*As a former teacher, I'm often surprised at what some past-pupils remember. It would be less embarrassing on occasions if they conveniently forgot. "I remember you saying one time. .." and out it comes, if not word for word, at least in its general thrust as they heard it. Even merely spoken words can have an extraordinary life-span. Sometimes we remember things our parents said, long after they are gone; their words are not dead so long as we are alive and recall them.*

*What's true of the ordinary word is even more true of God's. That's what's stressed in today's readings. It's put in the strongest of terms in the reading from Isaiah 55:10-11: "So it is with the word that goes from my mouth: it will not return to me unfulfilled, or before having carried out my good pleasure and having achieved what it was sent to do." The only defence against God's word is inadvertent or deliberate deafness. And being deaf or hard of hearing is something today's Gospel does not recommend. In fact, it urges us to have our ears cocked. But it conveys that message in a different image. It urges us to let the Word fall into good soil, so that it can yield a rich harvest in our lives.*

*Even though we're meant to have our ears cocked in church, and even though there's no substitute for hearing God's word as a worshipping community, the richest soil in any parish has to be in the home. The home, more than any place else, is a good place for growth. If space is made for God in the home, if parents pray with their children from an early age, if parents treat one another well, if the relationships within the home are basically sound, if Mass, as Christ's memorial, is seen to matter to the older people, then there is a fair old chance that in the hearts and minds of the children, the seed will take root and grow! It doesn't always happen, but on balance, if we do the best we can, there's a fair old chance that it will! In a sense, education is what remains when you have forgotten the texts themselves. We forget so easily what was said in church or school. We never forget what happens in the home. The hate and the tension and the fighting, or the hope and the love and the peace. I knew a Pole once who used to get up every night and do a Holy Hour for one of their children who was sick. Wasn't that extraordinary? What family could ever forget that? What family could fail to be influenced by it? But in a sense it's a bad example*

*because it's so exceptional. It's the ordinary things that make the impact on most of us, the daily effort, the daily drudgery, the repeated efforts a father or mother make separately or together to think of us and to remind us of God. It's only when somebody dies and people start looking back that the ordinary daily sacrifices take on a heroic pattern, and people say, "God, she was a great woman" or "he was a great man." If we receive God's word every day in our lives and try to live it, then we are scattering the seed ourselves for the younger generation and generations to come.*

*I wouldn't like to give the impression that it's only parents or older people who are expected to receive God's word and live it! I think God's call comes to us at its most personal and urgent when we are young. That's when most of us felt called to our particular vocations. That's when I felt the call to be a priest! God's word has fresh soil and a great future when it falls in a young heart. So if you are young, be generous with God. Be truthful and just and caring and good-living. Be faithful to your Sunday Eucharist and give it continued life throughout the week in the great commandment of love. One of the greatest saints the Church has ever produced, St Thérèse of Lisieux, "the little flower," was only twenty-four when she died. What use she made of her youth! She had one great objective: At the heart of the Church, my mother," she said, "I shall be love." Make that your own. Make it your personal resolution, your greatest objective, your life-long ambition! At the heart of the Church, my mother, I shall be love."*

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**The Cycle of Prayer  
Seafarers****Prayer**

*Lord God, Redeemer and inspiration of souls,  
in the Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the Sea,  
you have provided a light in the storm;  
by her favour and prayer,  
grant that we may set a course through these times  
to reach our safe haven in heaven with you.*