

## Closing Prayer

God of the heavens,  
God of the earth,  
all creation awaits your gift of new life.

Prepare our hearts  
to receive the word of your Son,  
that his gospel may grow within us  
and yield a harvest that is a hundredfold.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.

*Opening prayers, 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A<sup>2</sup>*

CPL • LBC Year A Proper 10.odt • 2020-06-09

<sup>2</sup> *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999,*

## Proper 10

*Sunday between 10 and 16 July inclusive*

### Principal Service readings

Isaiah 55.10-13	God's word will not return fruitless
Psalms 65.[1-7] 8-13	God makes the earth fruitful
Romans 8.1-11	The life of the Spirit
Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23	Parable of the sower

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *The parable of the sower*

<sup>1</sup>Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. <sup>2</sup>Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup>And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup>Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup>Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup>Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup>Let anyone with ears listen!

<sup>18</sup>Hear then the parable of the sower. <sup>19</sup>When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. <sup>20</sup>As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup>yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. <sup>22</sup>As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the

word, and it yields nothing.<sup>23</sup>But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.'

Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

## Comments and Questions

In Matthew chapter 13 Jesus teaches seven parables: it has been referred to as the chapter on parables. The word parable comes from the Hebrew word *māshāl*, which means wisdom-saying or proverb. The term 'parable' can be used to refer to anything from a brief aphorism to a lengthy allegorical tale. It is an allegorical tale we are given today with the parable of the sower, as Jesus himself calls it (13.18).

Matthew's story follows the version in Mark with little variation. Significantly, Matthew says that Jesus sat by the shore (13.1), but when the crowd grew too large he moved to a boat (13.2). The verb used by Mark too is 'sat', an indication of a true teacher. We might note that Jesus 'sat' as he taught the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5.1).

We are fortunate that Jesus himself explains the parable. The parable of the sower is rooted in the antiquity of the image of the scattering of seed on the ground, which would have preceded ploughing. Today, even gardeners often sow seed by ploughing first, then planting the seed, then covering the seed with soil. But that is not the way people in the ancient world did it. It's for this reason that many seeds are eaten by the birds. The seed seems to have been scattered quite indiscriminately, some of it falling on rocky ground, and some of it being eaten by birds or being choked by weeds. Although we might sow seed in a different way today, the meaning is clear – it is about fruitfulness and obstacles to fruitfulness. The question for us then is, are we bearing fruit? And how much? Or are there obstacles and temptations in the way? Although we can't choose where we are planted, as it were, we can ask ourselves whether we are producing as much spiritual fruit as is possible – Jesus mentions some quite substantial yields: thirty-, sixty- and a hundred-fold. God is the one who will in the end assess fruitfulness, but we can at least try not to get distracted or our energy sapped.

<sup>1</sup> New Revised Standard Version Bible is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

## Quotations

1

I think evangelicals would do better if they concentrated less on bolstering the formal authority of the Scripture – which I certainly would want to affirm – and more on displaying how biblical texts can shape lives in salutary ways, how they are fruitful texts, how they are texts one can live according to.

Miroslav Volf, 1956–

2

Man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God. The loftiness of this supernatural vocation reveals the greatness and the inestimable value of human life even in its temporal phase. Life in time, in fact, is the fundamental condition, the initial stage and an integral part of the entire unified process of human existence. It is a process which, unexpectedly and undeservedly, is enlightened by the promise and renewed by the gift of divine life, which will reach its full realization in eternity (cf. 1 Jn 3:1-2). At the same time, it is precisely this supernatural calling which highlights the relative character of each individual's earthly life. After all, life on earth is not an "ultimate" but a "penultimate" reality; even so, it remains a sacred reality entrusted to us, to be preserved with a sense of responsibility and brought to perfection in love and in the gift of ourselves to God and to our brothers and sisters.

*Evangelium Vitae*, encyclical of John Paul II, 25 March 1995, §2

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Word of God/scripture; discernment; prayer; reign of God; conversion; discipleship; Holy Spirit; Jesus Christ; paschal mystery; evangelisation; will of God