

Sunday Readings

16th July 2017

FIRST READING

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 55:10-11

Thus says the Lord: 'As the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.'

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 64:10-14. R/. Lk 8:8

R/. Some seed fell into rich soil and produced its crop.

You care for the earth, give it water,
you fill it with riches.

Your river in heaven brims over
to provide its grain. **R/.**

And thus you provide for the earth;
you drench its furrows;
you level it, soften it with showers;
you bless its growth. **R/.**

You crown the year with your goodness.
Abundance flows in your steps,
in the pastures of the wilderness it flows. **R/.**

The hills are girded with joy,
the meadows covered with flocks,
the valleys are decked with wheat.
They shout for joy, yes, they sing. **R/.**

SECOND READING

A reading from the letter of St Paul
to the Romans 8:18-23

I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory, as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us. The whole creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal his sons. It was not for any fault on the part of creation that it was made unable to attain its purpose, it was made so by God; but creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God. From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*



GOSPEL

Matthew 13:1-23

The Lord be with you. *And with your Spirit.*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the beach, and he told them many things in parables.

He said, 'Imagine a sower going out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up straight away, because there was no depth of earth; but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Listen, anyone who has ears!'

Then the disciples went up to him and asked, 'Why do you talk to them in parables?' 'Because' he replied, 'the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are revealed to you, but they are not revealed to them. For anyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. The reason I talk to them in parables is that they look without seeing and listen without hearing or understanding. So in their case this prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled:

You will listen and listen again, but not understand,
see and see again, but not perceive.

For the heart of this nation has grown coarse,
their ears are dull of hearing, and they have shut

their eyes,
for fear they should see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their heart,
and be converted
and be healed by me.

'But happy are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear! I tell you solemnly, many prophets and holy men longed to see what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.

'You, therefore, are to hear the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom without understanding, the evil one comes and carries off what was sown in his heart: this is the man who received the seed on the edge of the path. The one who received it on patches of rock is the man who hears the word and welcomes it at once with joy. But he has no root in him, he does not last; let some trial come, or some persecution on account of the word, and he falls away at once. The one who received the seed in thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this world and the lure of riches choke the word and so he produces nothing. And the one who received the seed in rich soil is the man who hears the word and understands it; he is the one who yields a harvest and produces now a hundredfold, now sixty, now thirty.'

The Gospel of the Lord,
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary Year A

The word of God

saint of the Week

Saturday 22 July 2017

St Mary Magdalene

Mary of Magdala was healed of “seven devils” by Jesus. She ministered to him in Galilee and was present at his crucifixion. She was in the group of women who were the first to discover the empty tomb, and it was to her that the risen Jesus first appeared.



The Western tradition is that Mary Magdalene is also “the woman who was a sinner” and the sister of Martha and Lazarus of Bethany. There is no evidence

either way, and the tradition is tenuous enough for even such authorities as St Ambrose to hold, with the East, that they are three different people. It seems, therefore, that although the Western tradition is to be respected and is a real inspiration, it may not necessarily be historical. This kind of ambiguity is inevitable in a religion such as Christianity, which is founded on definite historical events rather than myths which can be adjusted into logic. We need not worry about it too much: if it had been harmful to us to celebrate the tradition of heroic penitence, the Holy Spirit would not have allowed it.

Even without the extra tradition, Mary Magdalene is a unique and important character in the story of the Resurrection, chosen by Christ as one of the first witnesses of the event that changed the world.

Prayer of the Week

Hear my cry, O God;
listen to my prayer.

From the ends of the earth I call to you,
I call as my heart grows faint;
lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

For you have been my refuge,
a strong tower against the foe
I long to dwell in your tent forever
and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.

Psalm of David - Psalm 61.1-4

This parable about the sower of seed is the first of seven parables that Matthew placed in the centre of his gospel. Each of the parables adds a specific dimension to the reality that Matthew has described in the previous two chapters: although there are disciples who have begun to believe in him, Jesus is experiencing much rejection.

In the parable, the sower goes out and sows a great amount of seed. For various reasons much of the seed does not come to fruition. However, some of the seed that fell on rich soil produces an extraordinary amount of fruit.



The disciples then ask Jesus why he speaks in parables. Jesus, quoting a prophecy of Isaiah, enigmatically replies that parables both reveal and conceal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Many, even though they hear the words of a parable, refuse to recognize the voice of divine wisdom calling them to conversion of heart and to healing.

Matthew concludes this section by having Jesus amplify the parable of the sower. Some persons hear the word without understanding its deeper meaning; some receive it, but fall away when tribulation comes; some hear it, but worldly anxiety and greed choke off the life it gives; some hear the word, understand it, and bear an extraordinary amount of fruit.

Jesus tells us the good news that the seeds of God's kingdom have been abundantly sown everywhere in the world. Despite all the violence and despair that threaten us, we can live in hope. God's kingdom has already come, will continue to grow, and will ultimately triumph.

The human-divine mystery of God's kingdom means that we cannot grasp its meaning as we do the realities of this world. It is only in the humble attitude of prayer that we may receive the gift of faith's understanding and conversion of heart.

Jesus warns us that even if we have heard his word, worldly anxiety or greed can destroy our Christian life. Today, in our celebration of the Eucharist we pray that the Spirit will grant us faithful perseverance in living according to Christ's word so that God's kingdom will flourish beyond measure.