

Homily: 15th Sunday: Cycle A: 2023: Is 55; 10-11; Ps. 65; Rom 8: 18-23; Mt 13: 1-23

“How do we bear good spiritual fruit for God’s Kingdom?”

To follow-up on what Jesus says in the Gospel today: how can each one of us in our life become the seed, in the good soil, in which God’s Word bears 100, 60 or 30 fold spiritual fruit; rather than the seed in the bad soil in which the Word is choked off and dies:

because it doesn’t have deep roots, is choked off by greed, riches, and worldly concerns, or allows the evil one to come and rip it out of our hearts?

1. The first thing necessary to produce good spiritual fruit is a **real growing humility of heart and mind** which is primarily shown by a **life of holy obedience** (to have a listening as opposed to a stubborn human heart). In a spirit of Faith to be **docile** to the Holy Spirit at each moment of each day, and more consistently as time goes on. To be open to God’s working in our life calls for the spiritual attitude of being aware that God is the One who knows what is best for us rather than ourselves, and to trust Him and the teaching of our Holy Catholic Faith to bring us into communion with Christ in all of our **thoughts, words, and actions**. This is a very important point to always remember: *If a conflict comes up between our individual conscience and the clear teaching of the Catholic Church on faith and morals as laid out in the Catechism of the Catholic Church - the benefit of the doubt goes to the Church teaching because Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to lead the Church into all Truth - now for over 2000 years; Jesus did not promise that to our individual fallible hearts and minds. To trust God is speaking through our Catholic faith, and then to act on that trust is a great spiritual gift.* If we trust God rather than our own limited human resources, we will start to produce better spiritual fruit. Then God’s Word will take root in our hearts and minds and we will bear good fruit in the Lord.
2. Along with humility of heart and an obedient and open spirit, we are called to be **courageous**. Courage or Fortitude is the gift of the Holy Spirit, received in Baptism and renewed and deepened in Confirmation, which gives us the inner and outer strength to bear the inevitable difficulties that come from following Christ

and the Gospel way of life. St. Paul calls us to that courageous faith in the 2nd reading today when he reminds us, “*the sufferings of this present time are nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us.*” We need to remember this reality when we are **tempted** to be downcast and cave into the world and its philosophy of self-centeredness and rebellion against God and His Church, trying to create a utopian heaven on earth, which is not possible as long as there is sin. The ongoing temptation to just live for the now - which unfortunately **is the wide path** that leads to eternal destruction; **rather than the narrow path** of God that leads to eternal life and even ultimate interior joy and peace in this passing world.

3. Both of the first two conditions of *humility of heart* and *courage in faith* will only come about by developing a **deep interior life**, which is the union of the soul with the Blessed Trinity. This gift of union is a personal call from the Lord, which is meant to grow every single day of our lives. As I spoke about last week-end in my homily, in order to draw close to the Lord: **1.** we must accept God’s will in our daily life, especially in the difficult moments, and that reality only comes about because **2.** we truly accept God’s personal love for us and **3.** the daily call to ponder frequently the Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in our souls by sanctifying grace. The only way ultimately that we will produce good spiritual fruit is if we are in union with the living God, who alone gives us the grace and strength to bring His ultimate truth and love to fruition in our lives and to bring it into our relationships with others. Union with God: through *prayer*, through uniting our *daily duties* and our *sufferings* of life with Christ in company with Our Blessed Mother Mary as she asked us to do at Fatima, and through living *a life of charity* - this is the ONLY way to real spiritual growth and bearing fruit for the Kingdom. The saints show us this reality repeatedly in their lives, as they model for us how to live Gospel truth in the concrete circumstances of daily life. Please get in the habit of **reading** about their lives, hopefully on a daily basis. And may we ask them daily for the gift of their **intercession**, particularly our Blessed Mother Mary the holiest of the saints, so that we may all produce a harvest of 30, 60, or even 100-fold for the Lord and His Kingdom. God bless you.