

## 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

### GOSPEL

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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!'

(Matthew 13:1-9)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- A parable is a simple human story with a profound meaning.
- Parables were a familiar way of teaching in the time of Jesus, and some images had established meanings. For example, a vineyard, sons or servants represented Israel, while a master, king or father represented God.
- Chapter 13 of Matthew's Gospel contains numerous parables describing the kingdom of heaven.
- Matthew's Gospel uses the term *kingdom of heaven* rather than *kingdom of God* because his audience is largely Jewish converts to Christianity, and the Jewish people avoid using the holy name.
- The Sea of Galilee is also known as Lake Gennesaret and as Lake Tiberius. Jesus' base for his preaching ministry in the region was at the town of Capernaum on the northern shores of the lake. Peter had a house in this town.
- Archaeological excavations in Capernaum have revealed a house that was revered from very early times as 'the house of Peter'.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

This parable would have had a great appeal to the rural population living on the fertile land around the Sea of Galilee. There, the gentle undulating hills are green and verdant, in sharp contrast to the desert wilderness of the southern part of the province of Judea around Jerusalem.

In the longer version of today's gospel, Jesus explains the meaning of the parable of the sower. The different soils represent different human responses to hearing the word of God. The message is that, despite some failures, the sower's work ultimately succeeds. Not everyone is open to receiving the word and acting on it, but there is encouragement for those who allow the word to take root and bear fruit.

- Discuss some of the initiatives of your parish that have taken root and flourished.
- Have there been initiatives that have encountered obstacles and didn't take root? Why?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What are the rocks and thorns in our world that may cause the word of God to choke and wither? In the modern world, what are the things that make it difficult for the word of God to take root and flourish? How can believers 'cultivate their soil' to help the seed of faith grow? Share your reflections with others.
- Try to be 'rich soil' this week, not just for the word of God but also for those around you. Listen attentively to your family and work colleagues. Try to discern what God is saying to you in the events of everyday life.
- Say this prayer each day:

*Lord, may the seed of your word fall into deep soil in me. May it not return to you without yielding its fruit in me.*

