

**July 24, 2020**

**Friday of the 16<sup>th</sup> week in Ordinary Time**

**Jeremiah 3:14-17**

**Jeremiah 31:10, 11-13**

**Matthew 13:18-23**

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As educators and students, we have long known that there are two moments in the learning process. The first moment is when the teacher announces the message and the student listens. The second moment is when the student ponders the message, reflects on it and gradually makes it their own. The importance of both moments is obvious. Both take personal work. We are (and have been) in both moments over time.

It is in the nature of Jesus' parables to proclaim the message (as in the first moment) and we, the listeners, to take it in (as in the second moment).

The parable of the sower that we heard in its entirety two weeks ago on Sunday is given again today in shortened form. This parable is one of the most familiar in the Gospels. We can all probably tell it by heart. We easily understand the metaphor of "seed" being the "Word of God." And we certainly identify all the kinds of ground out there, and maybe even in here – in our hearts. We may even have gazed at wonderful works of art depicting the sower of old with the sack of seeds slung around the shoulders and flinging handfuls of seed somewhat recklessly all over the ground. Not like the precision of farm machinery today.

Matthew's Gospel takes deliberate pains to describe these kinds of grounds. And even more deliberately makes sure we know that the seed represents God's Word flung far and wide into the world. Without pointing fingers at the crowd, Jesus simply describes the grounds. We know where we stand if we are to be drawn into his spiritual wisdom. So be it. We will leave the grounds for our own later thoughts.

Let's look today at the Sower. Since we have been in the second moment of learning for many years, personally and as a community, we can see ourselves as united to Jesus in this role as sower of God's Word. We have been missioned into this role. It is our call and we have been doing it for 175 years. We have taken handfuls and heart-fulls all down the years: spreading the Word of God to every wind of the Spirit that ever so faithfully blows in our world.

Our job was to get the Word out. Like Fr. Gillet "leaving it to God alone to bless and make it prosper." We just kept getting the Word out for 175 years and counting.

We take this work seriously knowing that together, with God and each other, it is a way to bring about the reign of God.

Our IHM history in every era bears out the many women who got the Word out, consistently and faithfully, flung far and wide. It landed on all the grounds and in some fertile places it took root: in education, in writing, publishing, leadership in schools, parishes and dioceses.

In justice offices, spirituality and renewal centers, health care and hospitals, counseling offices and beauty through music and art—we got the Word out in the streets of our cities and the missions of far-away fields. We are still doing that – still out there. The seeds of God’s Word remain as plentiful as ever in our large sacks.

Admittedly, we know that we no longer have large numbers in the fields. We are not “the long blue line” of old. These particular numbers are down. Sowing, though, is our life-long work. So, with creativity, ingenuity, collaboration and ever-expanding technology, we keep flinging the seeds. We keep getting the Word out.

Now our long line is multi-colored, in the faces and voices and work of our IHM associates, our co-workers, former students, wonderful staff in our vibrant offices and every department – here at home and wherever IHMs work and sponsor.

The legacy of sowing continues in friends and prophets, who we cannot do without in this sacred work. We stand with them on the frontlines, in person or virtually, in prayer and activism here at home and in the fields. The Word of God is getting out, in classrooms, universities, parishes, hospitals, prisons and in serving the poor of our world.

Even more widely, the Word is getting out in our publications, statements of belief and letters of endorsements on critical issues: systemic racism, climate change, immigration, advocacy ... you know them all. We have representation on boards speaking boldly for just decisions that will benefit those most especially in need.

All the grounds receive the seeds even in this most stressful and chaotic of times. We trust that God will liberate and redeem the ears to hear as long as we keep getting the Word out.

In closing, one of my all-time favorite Church hymns keeps humming in me. It speaks of God’s Word and of the grounds of chaos and darkness and yet light that can open seeds and release the power. We, the sowers humbly stand by.

God, whose almighty Word  
Chaos and darkness heard  
And took their flight  
Hear us, we humbly pray  
And where the Gospel day  
Sheds not its glorious ray  
Let there be light.