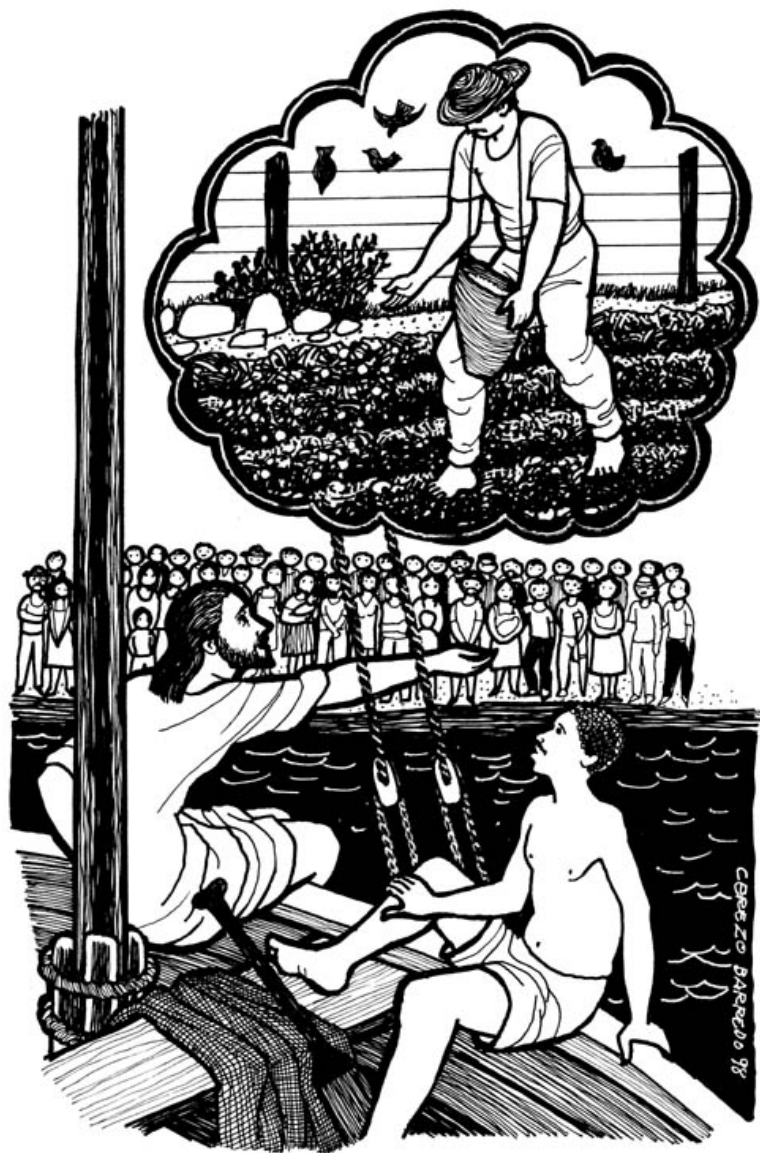


Commentary for the 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Gospel Summary



This parable about the sower of seeds is the first of seven parables that Matthew placed in the center 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 by transforming the

meaning of the seed from the word which initiates life in the kingdom, to the person who is called to life in the kingdom. 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.

Life Implications

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. Henry David Thoreau remarked: "Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders."

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. " . . . although you [Father] have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike" (Mt 11:25).

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.

Campion P. Gavalier, O.S.B