

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Jan 28th 2015

Memorial of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Priest and Doctor of the Church

Today serves as the memorial of Saint Thomas Aquinas, priest and doctor of the church. With this in mind, today's reflection is on the Gospel reading from Mark in which Jesus provides the parable of a sower sowing seeds onto a path, rocky ground, thorns, and rich soil. As we know, only the seeds that fell on rich soil produced fruit and, interestingly, as much as thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. As Jesus states, "the sower sows the word," but Satan, worldly anxiety, and the lure of riches, along with the craving for other things intrude and eventually choke off our ability or, better yet, our willingness to truly hear God's word and then to act accordingly. We are all at risk for choking out the word of God. Our busy lives and our tendency to seek out the successes and accoutrements that come with them have the potential to cause us to treat the word of God as background noise, which undermines our ability to hear the word of God. Or, we may hear it, but choke it out like the thorns in Jesus' parable.

So, how do we provide a richer soil for God's words? I look to St. Thomas Aquinas for some answers. As he was listening to the word of God and choosing to join the Dominican Order he was confronted with thorns and rocky soil by way of a family who tried to use temptations and imprisonment to keep him from acting on God's word. Despite these efforts, his strong faith and commitment allowed him to pursue his vocation and become a priest. And, not only did God's word grow, but it did so abundantly as St. Thomas Aquinas became an influential philosopher and theologian, and a model teacher for those studying for the priesthood. As we move forward in our daily lives, today's reading and the actions of St. Thomas Aquinas remind us of the importance of, at least, occasionally setting aside the many distractions in our lives in order to truly focus on not only hearing the word of God, but reflecting on how best to act on God's word to the benefit of all.

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