

## 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

As we know, the Gospels are littered with parables. This was Jesus' favourite method of teaching. Among the rabbis at the time of Jesus there was an attitude of almost reverence towards the parable. So when Jesus adopted this method of teaching he was following a tradition. But why teach in parables ?

Once there was a famous rabbi who loved to illustrate a truth by means of a story. One day his students asked him why he adopted this approach. He replied: 'The best way to answer your question is through a story.

' There was a time when Truth went around naked and unadorned. But the people shied away from him, and gave him no welcome. So Truth wandered through the land, rebuffed and unwanted.

'One day, very disconsolate, he met Story strolling along happily dressed in a multi-coloured robe.

'Truth, why are you so sad ?" Story asked.

"I'm sad because I am so old and so ugly that everybody avoids me," Truth replied.

"Nonsense!" laughed Story. 'That is not why people avoid you. Here, borrow my robe, and see what happens."

'So Truth donned Story's multi-coloured robe and, lo, everywhere he went, he was welcomed'.

And the rabbi concluded, "The fact is, people are unable to face the naked Truth; they much prefer the Truth disguised."

Sometimes the truth can be so painful that we are not able to take it straight. We have to dress it up. We have to adorn it. A story makes a bitter truth more palatable.

A story has another great advantage. Just as a very cheap candle can help a searcher find a gold coin or a priceless pearl, so a short parable can contain a great truth and enable us to penetrate to the very heart of the truth.

So what is Jesus saying to us in the short parable of the sower to which we have just listened?

The word of God is to the human heart what a seed is to the earth. Just as soil is barren without seed, so our lives are barren without the word of God. The Word of God is a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life.

The Church has always venerated the Sacred Scriptures as it venerated the Body of Christ in Holy Communion. In the Eucharist we are offered from the one table the Word of God and the Body of Christ.

Through his word God is continually calling us to a better and more fruitful life. Happy those who make the voice of God the most important voice in their lives. God doesn't speak to us like a dictator to his subjects. God speaks to us as a Father speaks to his children. His word is as gentle, as weak, as defenceless as a seed falling into the soil. Yet that word is more effective than the word of the most powerful dictator – it can change people's hearts.

God doesn't speak to us only in the Sacred Scriptures. God also speaks to us through the events of our lives. But it is the words of Scripture that help us to interpret what God is saying to us in those events. We will not be judged by results but only by the efforts we have made.

As Van Gogh – whose wonderful paintings leave our city this week – so simply said *"Life is only a kind of sowing time, the harvest is not here."*