

044 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A (2026)

The Constant Gardener

The seed mentioned in the parable of the sower is the word of God. We are the soil in which the seed of God's word is sown. The seed is very good, but whether the seed takes root and grows, depends on the quality of the soil. If the soil is rich, the seed will grow and produce a plentiful harvest. But if the soil is hard, or shallow, or overgrown with weeds, the seed will die.

Today, we each must ask our self: what quality of soil am I? Am I hard or rocky soil, or shallow soil, or am I soil that is good but overgrown with thorns? Or am I rich soil in which the seed of God's word has taken root and is producing a plentiful harvest?

Well, I would like to suggest the answer we can each give: I am all the above. We humans are complex creatures, and it is dangerous and wrong to put people in pigeonholes – to describe one person as hard soil and someone else as fertile soil is never to capture the whole truth.

Personally, I find it helpful to see myself as the entire field in which the seed is sown and to recognise that there are areas of myself that are hard and unresponsive to God's word; that there are other parts of me that are more shallow and other parts again that get choked by all sort of worries and issues. But amazingly, amidst all of that, there are parts of me that are truly rich soil, that produce good fruits, and I give thanks and praise to God for that.

I also recognise that the hardness and softness of the ground is seasonal. It is not the same all the time. At the end of summer, the ground is hard and baked. But then the autumn rains come, and the ground softens and becomes more receptive to the seed; a crop grows and is harvested in the Spring. Then with the onset of summer the ground hardens again and the cycle repeats.

It is the same with our growth in the spiritual life. There are seasons when, for whatever reason, we are like the hard earth – not very receptive to God's word, perhaps even a little resistant to the workings of God's Spirit. And every now and then we need a season to be fallow to regenerate. We can't just keep producing fruits all the time. That is OK – perhaps necessary – as long as periodically, like the earth, we have a season of growth in which new life sprouts and fruitfulness ensues.

A final thought! If you have a garden at home – especially if it is a large garden with many beautiful plants and flowers – you have to keep working on it. If you neglect the garden for a few months, it will grow wild and be overtaken by weeds. You have to be a constant gardener, and that is what we all have to be with regards to the soil that is ourselves – we must constantly tend it to give the seed of God’s love the best chance to be fruitful in us.

Of course, it is not all up to us, thankfully. Today’s reponsorial psalm speaks beautifully of God, the constant gardener, who is always tending us as he tends the earth:

*You care for the earth, give it water;
You fill it with riches.
Your river in heaven brims over
to provide its grain.
And thus, you provide for the earth,
you drench its furrows,
you level it, soften it with showers,
you bless its growth.*

And so we pray, ‘Lord, tend the garden which is our selves. Bless our growth.’

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