

Suggested Opening Song: Seek Ye First, #159

The setting of today's Gospel may remind us of a warm midsummer day—maybe like today. Jesus comes outside and walks down to the sea. So many people gather along the shoreline that Jesus decides to go out in a boat and speak to the entire crowd from there. Imagine yourself sitting on a beach on a beautiful day with hundreds of others, listening to the Lord teaching in parables. Through the power of imagination, we have that opportunity today.

As we gather let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

Profession of Faith p. 142

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (*bow as we say*) and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Introductory Rite:

Greeting:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
Blessed be God forever. **Blessed be God forever.**

Penitential Rite: p. 10

Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to participate in this sacred celebration.

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Opening Prayer:

O God, who show the light of your truth to those who go astray, so that they may return to the right path, give all who for the faith they profess are accounted Christians the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the name of Christ and to strive after all that does it honor.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading p. 42

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Isaiah 55:10-11

Thus says the LORD: Just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14

R/. The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

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You have visited the land and watered it; greatly have you enriched it.

God's watercourses are filled; you have prepared the grain. **R/.**

Thus have you prepared the land: drenching its furrows, breaking up its clods, softening it with showers, blessing its yield. **R/.**

You have crowned the year with your bounty, and your paths overflow with a rich harvest; the untilled meadows overflow with it, and rejoicing clothes the hills. **R/.**

The fields are garmented with flocks and the valleys blanketed with grain. They shout and sing for joy. **R/.**

Second Reading

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Romans 8:18-23

Brothers and sisters: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Matthew 13:1-23 or 13:1-9

Glory to you, Lord

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

[The disciples approached him and said, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He said to them in reply, "Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand. Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says:

You shall indeed hear but not understand, you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and be converted, and I heal them.

"But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

"Hear then the parable of the sower. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."]

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection on the Word:

- Many birds love to eat seed. One can hardly fault the birds who spy seed along a path for flying down and gobbling it up. We would do the same if we ate seed rather than the fruits, grains, and vegetables it eventually produces. But the fact that the birds are fed by the sower in Jesus' parable, that the sower is so generous with scattering it everywhere that he does not mind that a good amount of the seed will not bear fruit as intended, implies that the sower doesn't view this as a loss. In the same way, God's word is to be sown so generously that it's all right that some won't understand it, others won't accept it, still more will not take it to heart, and many will find it difficult to overcome the allure of contrary impulses. Ideally, we want to be fertile soil for its implantation, but we also rejoice that others may consume it in their own way, with only a small chance that it will bear fruit down the road.
- Like seed that is sown over an entire field, God's word is proclaimed to this entire church. Every Sunday we are obliged to make ourselves fertile soil for the word: listening to it carefully, understanding it as best we can, taking it to heart, cultivating it, applying it to our daily lives, and spreading it by what we say and do. When we do all this, we follow God's will, enabling the word to achieve the end for which it was sent.
- God spoke and the world was created, from the sun and stars to human beings. Jesus is the Word become flesh, born into the world to save us from our sins. God's word created us. God's word redeems us. God's word brought us this life and will bring us eternal life. No wonder God says, "My word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). It is God's will that we live and that we live eternally.

Question of the Week

What will I do this week to cultivate God's word? Which passages from scripture have I applied to my life recently or regularly?

Prayer of the Faithful:

We long to make the world a better place for all, and so we pray that, just as God's word comes down from the heavens to bear fruit in us, God's love and mercy may come down to all those in need.

- For the Church, that we may be inspired to spread the good news of God's infinite love and redemptive mercy, allowing both to bear fruit through us, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- That we may increase our care for our common home, assuring that it will remain more and more fertile and hospitable for scores of generations to come, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For just wages and safe working conditions for all those who sow, cultivate, and harvest our fruits and vegetables, especially migrant laborers, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For victims of gun violence and their families, that they may receive justice and healing, along with the realistic hope that one day it will end, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For those who have dedicated their lives to spreading God's word, especially those who sow it on rocky ground or among thorns or face persecution or hardship for their work, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For what else should we pray? Let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

God of wisdom and goodness, open our hearts and minds to your word so that it may take root in us and flower for the rest of our lives. Grant this and all our prayers through the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer: p. 176

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Rite of Peace:

The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Communion:

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

Having consumed these gifts, we pray, O Lord, that, by our participation in this mystery, its saving effects upon us may grow.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Concluding Rite:

Final Blessing:

May the Lord bless us, ✠ protect us from all evil and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Go in peace! **Thanks be to God.**

Suggested Closing Song: Eye Has Not Seen, #160 Verses 1 & 2