

Father O'Connor's Homily for 12 July 2026  
Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time-A

Isaiah 55: 10-11

Romans 8: 18-23

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

Advertisers know that they must target a specific audience if they are going to make a sale. The “Dear Resident” bulk-mailing approach is not terribly effective. People want to feel personally addressed.

There are many specific audiences that advertising appeals to. I would like to point out two today: “the belongers” and “the achievers.”

For many people, it is important to feel that they belong. The fashion industry does this all the time. People want to fit in with the latest styles. And so advertising targets this group. They are “the belongers.”

Another group is “the achievers.” Achievers are often very successful people. And they don’t want to be like everybody else. They don’t follow the styles. They want to set the styles. And so advertising might say to the achiever, “This is something that most people can’t afford – but you can! After all, you are not like everybody else!”

In today’s Gospel, Jesus demonstrates how different audiences will receive His Word in different ways. He delivers the same message – the same Word – but not everyone will hear it in the same way.

Jesus tells a parable about the seed as the Word of God being received by different soil types: “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.” And then Jesus adds, “Whoever has ears ought to hear.”

Unlike the different personality types to which the advertising world appeals with custom-designed messages, we choose the kind of soil we offer the seed of God’s Word to grow in – or not grow in. The condition of the soil symbolizes our receptivity to God’s eternal and unchanging Word.

Now when I look at those four kinds of soil, I need to ask myself the question: “What kind of soil do I provide for the Word of God, the seed, to

grow in?” I have to tell you very honestly that I find evidence of all four kinds in my life – the footpath, the rocky ground, the thorns, and the fertile soil. Not always at the same time, but all four of those images ring true for me, and I’ll bet they do for you. It comes down to this: we are the ones who determine the kind of soil we give the seed of God’s eternal Word to grow in – or not grow in.

There were two sisters, Lisa and Shelly. Both liked to swim. Lisa practiced every day, and had just won a competition.

Her dad was talking about this as he and Shelly were snacking in the kitchen.

He asks, “Shelly, don’t you want to do something like Lisa did?” Well, Shelly wasn’t into practice. She just enjoyed lounging at the pool.

So Shelly replies, “No, I really don’t want to do that, Dad. I’d rather just sit here and have cookies and milk with you.”

We can take that approach with our discipleship too – just sitting back and admiring the Christian life. Or we can commit ourselves to really digging in and practicing it faithfully day after day.

There was a young man who wanted to enter the seminary. He went through the admissions process, listed the college he attended, but did not include a graduation transcript.

The admissions counselor contacted the college and found out that this young man had indeed been there for four years. But he had audited every single course – with no assignments, no exams and no academic credit. He had just wanted to enjoy campus life. And although he had been there for four years, he never earned a graduation diploma.

The writer who cites this illustration says that sometimes that is what we do in our discipleship. We become mere auditors of the Christian life, rather than being full participants. And there is a great deal of difference between “being mildly interested” and “being fully committed.”

Jesus teaches us that we choose how we receive the seed of His eternal Word. And, with God’s grace, that we can cultivate the soil that we have so that it produces fruit “a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.”

There is an invitation at Mass right before we receive Holy Communion. The priest takes the consecrated Host and Chalice and holds

them up – the Body and Blood, the soul and divinity of Jesus Christ Himself – and announces: “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.”

And we all respond: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. But only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

“The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest,” we sang in the Responsorial Psalm today [Psalm 65].

The Gospel teaches us that the seed is the Word of God. And Christ Himself is the sower.

We pray that His seed may find in us rich soil, and so we add: “But only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

Lord of the 100-fold harvest, we ask you: Please, say that word over us. So that each of us may “yield a fruitful harvest.”