

July 10
Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Is 55:10-11 Rom 8:18-23 Mt 13:1-9

Sister Catherine Marie Bazar

Today's readings hold a real challenge for Dominicans who cherish the Truth of the Word! Isaiah offers God's analogy of the rain and snow yielding up seeds for the sower to plant and till and then to distribute. So too are we commissioned to water and nurture, plant and till the seeds of God's Word so that everyone will be strengthened on the journey to accomplish God's plan in the universe. God also makes it clear that an idle return on this is not an option.

Now, what about those seeds? Observe how carefully a sower must tend to them by first cultivating the receiving soil, distributing wisely, rotating fields, providing a surplus, resting fallow ground, co-creating with the environment, even bringing forth enriched hybrids or new, sturdier versions to feed upon. But most importantly, the sower waits in silence and prayer while the elements do their work.

How does all this apply to God's Word – going forth, tending to, feeding, returning to the Kingdom well used? How do we become faithful stewards of the Word in our world today where individualism, manifesting itself in power, possessions, and prestige, has run rampant? This has resulted in Matthew's rocky soil, thistles, shallow ground, and unyielding paths to deal with. Yet, if our labors are not focused here first of all, how will these grounds ever give over and become good and productive soil? For us, the challenge is not in the Message but in the poverty of the ground upon which it is preached. And we, too, must give ourselves over not only to the task but also to the silence and prayer that awaits new growth.

Joan Chittister takes a hard look at some old "words" from the past – the famous Seven Capital Sins – and offers us fresh "nutrients" to feed upon from them. She says that besides the personal failings we have all learned from catechism times, today we must preach the seven capital social sins our generation should attend to. For example, we **envy** the forests of other nations, so we gut them in order that each person in the U.S. can consume 260 lbs. of meat per year, as compared with the 6 ½ lbs. consumed yearly in poor countries. We take such **pride** in personal looks that we spend eight billion dollars yearly on cosmetics. That's two billion dollars more than what would provide a basic education for everyone in the world. We **gluttonously** hoard surplus food that could feed Ethiopia, North Korea, and Haiti, while spending seventeen billion dollars yearly on pet food. That's four billion dollars more than what would provide basic health care to the entire world. On and on it goes! All seven of them!

These are hard words, ugly truths, unpalatable realities, insults to the collective conscience, that we don't like to hear from our pulpits, in our classrooms, or on our political platforms. But they are also God's Words for our "season," moral seeds that need to be tended to, and whose fruits are to transform and reconcile hearts and minds souls with the universe.

We Dominicans, preachers of the Word, have a great calling to attend to at this time in our many and varied ministries. Like dedicated farmers, let us be up early! Let us tend the spiritually depleted soil, nurture and revitalize its potential, plant those seeds, water those truths, scare off those crows, toil in the noonday sun, and bring forth sturdy and productive Words. Words that "will not return to God idle but shall accomplish God's will, the purpose" – in our day – "for which they were intended." But above all, let us find the energy and purpose for co-creating new seeds of life with God, first on our knees.