

15th Sunday of the Year A July 10, 2011 – Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

The gospel parable that we have just heard is a very familiar one. We read about the different kinds of ground on which the seed is thrown. Some of it fell on hard ground, some on rocky and shallow ground, some on thorny ground, and some on good ground. What kind of ground are we like? I would suggest that at different times in life we are like all the above. At times we are hardened to the word of God, at times shallow, at times choked by the cares of life, and at times receptive.

I want to reflect for a moment on the ground with many thorns. I have 8 nieces and nephews, and when they were in college I managed to visit each one to take them out to dinner and spend an evening with them in conversation. I now have 29 great nieces and nephews, and the oldest one, Holly, just graduated from U.C. I just got the dinner in, a few weeks before graduation. We went to an Italian restaurant. Her brother John joined us, he too is a U.C. student. It was a wonderful evening, I enjoyed it, I hope they did. But there was one thing that bothered me. All through the meal, my niece had her i-pod or i-phone in her hand, under the table, and was in constant communication with her friends. She was always attentive and even engaging in conversation, but somehow could do both things at the same time. I wanted to say, please put that away, but of course I did not, I wanted to build a relationship rather than end one. I know she is typical of young people today.

I do worry about how bombarded we are today by technology, by communication, by the media. We seem to be choked by the cares of this world, how can we ever be open and receptive to and hear the word of God?

Fr. James Martin had an interesting article in America magazine this past week. It was called Status Update, the Church in the Digital Age. He pointed out how important it is for the church to keep up on modern technology. He pointed out how the church has always changed and used whatever media were available to spread the gospel. Jesus used parables drawn from everyday life, Paul used letters, St. Augustine invented autobiography, the middle ages used art, Dorothy Day founded a newspaper, Bishop Fulton Sheen used television. And so must we change today. I am pathetically behind the times. The staff here is much better, but I am sure we must begin to work harder to improve the web page and use of other technology in order to spread the seeds of the gospel here at St. Charles.

I have one other point I would like to make, this from a woman lay minister, from all places the internet. She asks "How do we make the ground into rich soil?" We make it rich by adding organic matter. We add compost and manure and other throw away materials, things that are icky and unpleasant. Think about it, the most important thing for growth takes place in darkness, fed mostly by the natural but often unsavory things. She asks parents to consider this. We try to shield our kids from pain, hurt, disappointment, but it can be these very things that foster their growth. Think about important people in history. It was overcoming great handicaps that made them great. I think of Teddy Roosevelt, who as a child suffered from asthma and became the most energetic president of them all, or Wilma Rudolph, who as a child had polio and became a world class sprinter in the 1960 Olympics. When we look back on our own lives, did we not grow from some of our failures and disappointments. Perhaps it's the very weakness and helplessness we experience in failure and disappointment that opens us up to God, and makes us receptive to the seeds of faith.

May we learn to accept our crosses in life, may we be open to receiving the word of God.