The Lord Jesus came down to us and we enjoy the fruit of his blessing. More specifically, he is still with us as the Risen Lord. His presence is one of power and humility and a loving challenge to grow with him. “You care for the earth and give it water” (Ps.64:10).

His presence is seen “as the rain and snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth” (Is.55:10), and such is the action of the word of God in our hearts “that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty” (Is. 55:11).

Jesus is the living water, the fountain of life, in this earthly desert of our existence. We can understand why “the whole of creation is waiting for God to reveal his sons and daughters” (Rom.8:19). What revelation are you to others?

You are sons and daughters chosen in the plan of salvation. “The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are revealed to you” (Matt.13:11).

Jesus is the “sower who went out to sow” (Matt.13:3). How does this seed grow in our hearts? Is there a longing in our hearts? Do “we groan inwardly waiting...to be set free” (Rom.8:13).

The Gospel today describes the different soils (our hearts) into which the seed (word of God) comes. Which is you: hard ground, rocky, thorny or good?. Hopefully, you are like the seed that “fell into rich soil and produced its crop” (Response).

Whoever “receives the seed in rich soil, hears the word and understands it” (Matt.13:23) is blessed. “Happy are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear!” (Matt.13:16).

Scripture: Read the parable of the Sower (Matt.13:1-23) and Jesus’ explanation of it.

Liturgy: Where in the celebration of the liturgy is the sowing of the Word?

Doctrine: God wants his word to take root in us and produce a hundred-fold. How?

Witness: The Christian mission is evangelization, to sow the word of God in the hearts of the people. It is also pre-evangelization i.e. help prepare their hearts to receive the Word.

FOR THE CHILDREN

Discuss the parable of the ‘Sower and the Seed’ (Gospel)

Listen to word of God at Holy Mass. Let it grow in your heart.

Jesus spoke of different soils. What do they mean? Which are you? Follow the Teaching of the Church.

What can you do to make yourself into good soil for the Word of God? (Witness)
FOR TEENAGERS  ‘Parable of the Sower and the Seed’  (Shared Christian Praxis)

**Name the Present Action:**  What is a parable? With what can you identify yourself in the parable?

**Your Story and Vision:**  What is your experience of the word of God? What do you expect?

**Church’s Story:**  What is the Church’s role in the parable? What does it expect of us?

**Church Story and your Story:**  What does the Church Story and your life experience say to each other?

**Your Vision and the Church’s Vision:**  How do I need to think and act for the future? Where am I in the work of evangelization?

RCIA
Consider the beatitude in the parable of the Sower and the Seed: “Happy are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear!”  (Mt.13:19).  How do you see and hear Christ in your life? How does the Word of God take root in your life?

LIFE EXPERIENCE
My greatest experience of the parable of the ‘Sower and the Seed’ was an ACTS Retreat. It consisted of a gathering of all sorts, from doctors to truck-drivers, not particularly religious. Some came out of curiosity. After three days, I witnessed transformations beyond expectation. Books could be written about them. Suffice it to say that I witnessed the sower sowing in different and difficult soils and reaping a great harvest.

*P.S. These retreats are now being planned in South Africa.*

LITTLE ANGELINA
Certainly there are different kinds of people and different soil; but what is a _pregnolati_? Angelina mentioned that her new friend, Lisa, was one. This worried her parents. Could it be a sexual orientation? They decided to ask a priest and that was me; and I could not tell what is a _pregnolati_. Finally, we decided to humbly ask Angelina. “Pregnolati,” she said, “is Lisa’s surname.”  _Res ipsa loquitur_.

St. Bonaventure tells us the tongue is important, “not so much because of taste but because of what it says.”  (i)


IMPORTANT WORD:  ‘Parable’
Parable is derived the Greek word _παράβολη_, _parable_, meaning comparison or similitude. The Hebrew equivalent is _משל_, _mashal_, meaning ‘similar’ or ‘to be like.’ We are well acquainted with parables that tell a story to illustrate something deeper. Such are many of the parables of Jesus. The parable of ‘The Sower’ is more an allegory, in the sense that all the elements of the story are essentially interpreted, whereas in a normal parable the focus is just on a point or moral of the story. Parable is sometimes translated from the Hebrew word _משלי_, _hidah_, meaning riddle or enigmatic saying. Soren Kierkegaard describes the parable as a dialectical knot which the listener has to solve for himself maieutically, i.e. a Socratic method of self-discovery. (i)

Lesson 2: NEW WAYS IN EDUCATION

Most education systems are based on learning the accumulated wisdom of the past. They give answers to past questions which may not be the questions of people today. Thus, much of what is taught could be irrelevant to the learner. The question is how to teach in this contemporary world of change. Modern educationists, such as Carl Rogers and Paulo Freire have pointed out some of the faults with most education systems which emphasize memorizing a vast body of knowledge to be reproduced in an examination, seemingly regardless of how pertinent it might be to their lives.

Rogers and Freire emphasize that education should involve making people aware of what is happening in their lives, to see why it is happening and to solve their own problems. Basically they have to learn self-confidence and believe in themselves. This approach hails back to the ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, who followed the thinking of ‘Gnothi seauton’ i.e. ‘Know thyself.’ Soren Kierkegaard, an existentialist and admirer of Socrates, developed his thinking into ‘Choose thyself.’ More specifically, proper education should entail discovering oneself and making one’s own decisions, if one is to grow and be a fully responsible person. This is enhanced in the way people come together to share and to learn.

Rogers and Freire distinguish between two basic kinds of learning, viz. memorizing and experiential learning. Questions have been raised about how much time is given to memorizing and how much meaning it has for learners. In experiential-based learning, on the other hand, the learner is not simply a subject of learning but an active person in the learning process. Here students are enabled find their own answers, not ready made, and solve their own problems. This approach is an education for freedom, for self-reliance, for maturity, for personal responsibility. In line with this, Freire devised the conscientization method of education in his ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed.’ It is a process that helps people become more aware of themselves and to transform themselves and their world. Education then is not based on knowledge that is static but rather knowledge as an act of knowing, a dynamic process. It means both teachers and pupils are in a learning process together.
Learning is not a matter of learning a lot of new things but rather discovering the truths of our lives, of our faith. People do see a lot of things without seeing them consciously. They need to become more aware of their realities and make decisions. This is ‘conscientization’ as compared to the older educational system of the ‘banking concept,’ where the teacher programmes the learners and fills them with loads of information.

Freire’s and Rogers’ method of learning is a life-situation approach. Freire works from what he calls ‘codes,’ a process of objectifying life situations and discovering for oneself the problems to be solved and then proceeding to transform the situation. It is here that some of Freire’s insights were taken up in ‘Liberation Theology.’ Ultimately, this approach is rooted in personal involvement and personal responsibility. It aims at freedom and creativity for the individual, to make choices and to live with consequences of one’s own decisions. How much do such educational developments have an impact on modern catechetics? Thomas Groome shows some of these insights in his catechetical approach of ‘Shared Christian Praxis.’

P.S. Interestingly, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us: “the essence of Christianity is not a system of ideas. It is a person, Jesus Christ.” Experientially, he highlights scripture and liturgy “where Jesus lives and speaks to us.” He states how we have to “discover anew the true reality of Jesus Christ and through him discover the way to an upright and just life.”

(i) An example of Thomas Groome’s ‘Shared Christian Praxis’ approach can be seen on page 2 above, under heading, FOR TEENAGERS.


(iv) Ibid.

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