

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

(Lk 8:4-15)

(Poem Vol.2, pp.196-8, 204-6; Gospel Vol.3, pp.162-4, 170-4)

(Jesus tells a parable:) 'A sower went out to sow. He owned many fields of various kinds. He had inherited some from his father, on which his carelessness had allowed thorny plants to proliferate. Other fields had been purchased by him: he had bought them from a neglectful man and he had left them as they were. In other fields there were many intersecting roads, as the man loved comfort and did not like to travel a long way when going from one place to another. Finally, there were some fields, the closest to his house, which he had looked after to have a pleasant sight in front of his house. They were free from stones, thorns, couch-grass and so on. So the man took his sack of seed-corn of the best quality, and began to sow. The seed fell on the good soft soil, which had been ploughed, weeded, fertilized, in the fields near the house. It was spread in the fields with many roads and paths, which divided them into small portions, and caused also the fertile soil to be covered by ugly arid dust. Some of the seed fell on the fields where the foolishness of the man had allowed the thorny plants to proliferate. The plough had turned them upside down, it looked as if they were not there, but they were, because only fire, the radical destructor of weeds, prevents them from growing again. The last seed fell on the fields, which he had recently bought and had left as they were, without ploughing them and without removing all the stones, which had sunk into the ground forming a hard pavement on which no plant could take root. After scattering all the seed, he went back home and said: "Very well! All I have to do is to wait for the harvest". And he was delighted because, as months went by, he saw the corn come up thick in the fields near the house and grow... oh! what a beautiful sea! and it turned gold and it sang hosannas to the sun, as one ear rubbed against another. The man said to himself: "All the fields are like these ones! Let us prepare sickles and granaries. How much bread! How much gold!" And he was delighted...

He cut the corn in the nearest fields and after that he went to the ones which he had inherited from his father and which he had left in a wild state. And he was taken aback. The corn had come up, because the fields were good and the soil cultivated by the father was rich and fertile. But its fertility had affected also the thorny plants which had been overturned but not destroyed. They had grown again and had formed a really thick ceiling of bramble, through which the corn had not been able to emerge, with the exception of a few ears, and it was completely suffocated.

The man said: "I neglected this place. But there was no bramble in the other fields, so it should be all right". And he went to the fields which he had purchased shortly before. His surprise and grief were greater. The thin withered corn leaves were strewn all over like dry hay. Nothing but dry hay. "How come?" moaned the man. "And yet there are no thorns here! And it was the same seed! And it had come up thick and beautiful. It can be seen by the well formed and numerous leaves. Why

then did it all wither before coming into ear?" And with real regret he began to dig the ground to see whether there were any mole burrows or other pests. There were no insects or rodents. But how many stones! A stone-pit! The fields were literally paved with chips of stone and the scanty earth covering them was deceiving. Oh! if he had ploughed deep at the right time! Oh! if he had dug the ground before accepting the fields and buying them as good ones! Oh! if, after the mistake he had made in buying what he had been offered without making sure of its goodness, if at least he had improved them by working hard! It was now too late and all regret was useless.

The man stood up, and, downhearted as he was, he went to the fields where he had built many roads for his comfort... and mad with grief he tore off his clothes. There was absolutely nothing there... The dark soil of the field was covered with a thin layer of white dust... The man collapsed to the ground moaning: "But why here? There are no stones, no bramble here, because these are our fields. My grandfather, my father and I have always owned them and in many many years we made them fertile. I built the roads, I have taken some of the earth away, but that could not make them so sterile... " He was still weeping when he received the answer to his grief from a swarm of birds which flew eagerly from the paths to the field and back to the paths in search of seeds... The field, which had been turned into a network of paths, on the edges of which the corn had fallen, had attracted many birds, which first had eaten the corn on the paths and then the seeds in the field, down to the last grain.

So the same seed, sown in all the fields, had yielded one hundred to one in some, sixty, thirty, nothing in others. Listen, anyone who has ears. The seed is the Word: the same for everybody. The places where the seed fell: your hearts. Meditate the parable and understand it. Peace be with you.'

(Jesus explains the parable to his disciples) 'Now listen to the spirit of the parable.

We have four kinds of fields: the fertile ones, the thorny ones, the stony ones and the ones full of paths. We also have four types of spirits. There are the honest spirits, the spirits of good will, prepared by their own will and by the work of an apostle, of a "true" apostle; because there are apostles who have the name but not the spirit of an apostle and they are more lethal for the will in formation, than birds, thorns and stones. They upset in such a way, through their intolerance, their haste, their reproaches and their threats, as to drive people away from God for ever. There are others who, on the contrary, through an excess of benignity, utterly out of place, cause the seed to rot in too soft a soil. Because of their lack of vigour, they kill the vigour of the souls they cure. But let us consider the true apostles, that is, the shining mirrors of God. They are paternal, merciful, patient, and at the same time they are strong, as their Lord is strong. Now: the souls prepared by them and by their own will can be compared to the fertile fields, free from stones and brambles, from couch-

grass and darnel, in which the word of God thrives and every word, that is every seed, bears a bundle of ears, yielding in some places one hundred, in others sixty, thirty per cent. Are there any like that among those who follow Me? There certainly are. And they will be holy. They come from all castes and countries. And there are Gentiles among them and they will yield one hundred per cent because of their good will, only because of that, or because of their good will and that of an apostle or disciple who prepares them for Me.

The thorny fields are those in which thorny tangles of personal interests, which suffocate the good seed, have been allowed to grow by carelessness. You must watch yourselves all the time. Never say: "Oh! I am well formed, I have been sown, I can rest assured that I will bear seeds of eternal life". Watch yourselves; the struggle between Good and Evil is still on. Have you ever watched a colony of ants that install themselves in a house? There they are, near the fireplace. The housewife takes all foodstuff away from there and puts it on the table. They sniff the air and attack the table. The housewife puts the food in a cupboard and they get into the cupboard through the keyhole. The woman hangs her food supply from the ceiling, and they go a long way along walls and beams, down the rope and reach the food. The woman burns them, scalds them, poisons them. And thinking that she has destroyed them she is happy. But if she does not watch, what a surprise she gets! The new hatched ones come out and she has to start all over again. And that is what happens while you live; you must be careful and uproot the evil weeds as soon as they come up. Otherwise they will form a ceiling of brambles which suffocate the corn. Worldly cares, deceiving wealth form the tangle, suffocate the seed of God and prevent it from coming into ears.

And here are the fields full of stones. How many there are in Israel! They are the ones that belong to the "children of the laws" as My cousin Judas quite rightly said. In them there is not the one Stone of Witness, nor the Stone of the Law. There is the quarry of poor petty human laws made by men. They are so many that with their weight they have broken also the Stone of the Law into chips. A disaster which does not allow the seed to take root. The root is no longer nourished because there is neither soil nor sap. The water stagnating on the stone pavement causes the seed to rot, the sun makes the stones hot and parches the little plants. Such are the spirits of those who put complicated human doctrines in place of the simple doctrine of God. They even receive My word with joy. At first it shakes and allures them. But later... They would need to be heroes and work hard to clean the field, their souls and minds of all rhetorical stones. The seed would then take root and bear long spikes. As it is... it bears nothing. The fear of human retaliation is enough. It is enough to say: "And after? What will the mighty ones do to me?" and the poor seed languishes without nourishment. It is enough for the whole quarry to stir with the vain sound of the hundreds of precepts, which have been put in place of the Precept, that man perishes with the seed received... Israel is full of them. That explains why the coming to God is in inverse ratio to human power.

The last are the dusty barren fields full of roads. Those of worldly selfish people. Their comfort is their law, enjoyment their aim. Their ambitions: to do no work, to slumber, to enjoy themselves, to feast... The spirit of the world is their king. The dust of worldliness covers the soil which becomes mouldy. Birds, that is dissipation, rush on to the thousand paths which have been built to make life easier. The spirit of the world, that is, of the Evil one, picks up and destroys all the seed that falls on this soil open to all sensuality and laxity...

Have you understood? Have you any questions to ask? No? In that case we can go and rest and tomorrow we will leave for Capernaum.'