

## Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Readings and Background



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**First Reading :** *Isaiah 55:10-11*

The Word of the Lord shall achieve its purpose.

**Responsorial Psalm ;** *Psalms 65:10-14*

A prayer of praise to God for his abundance.

**Second Reading :** *Romans 8:18-23*

Together with all of creation, we await God's redemption.

**Gospel Reading :** *Matthew 13:1-23*

Jesus teaches that the kingdom of heaven is like seed that has been sown on good soil.

### Background on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel marks the beginning of the third long discourse given by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. Over the next few weeks, the Gospel readings will consist of the **entire 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew's Gospel**, a lengthy teaching discourse.

Throughout this discourse, Jesus will offer several parables to illustrate for his listeners what he means by the kingdom of heaven.

He begins with the **parable of the sower**, which appears rather straightforward—of course seeds grow best in good soil. Seeds that miss the soil, **are sown on rocky ground, or are sown among other plants will not grow**. The surprise in the parable is **the enormous yield of the seed that is sown on good soil**.

Jesus then explains his use of parables. Jesus seems to suggest that he uses parables to teach because the meanings of parables are not self-evident.



**The hearer must engage in some degree of reflection in order to comprehend the message of a parable.** In this way, the medium—the parable—models the point of the parable of the sower.

***Those who are willing to engage themselves in the effort to understand will be rewarded by the discovery of the message and will bear fruit.***

To bring home the point, ***Jesus interprets the parable of the sower to his disciples.***

**The different types of soil in which the seeds are sown are metaphors for the disposition with which each individual hears the teaching about the kingdom of heaven.**

- Some will be easily swayed away from the kingdom of heaven.
- Some will receive it for a time but will lose it when faced with difficulties.
- Some will hear the word but will then permit other cares to choke it out.
- Yet some will receive it well, and the seed will produce abundant fruit.

## Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)



### Gospel Reading

*Matthew 13:1-23 (shorter form: Matthew 13:1-9)*

Jesus teaches that the kingdom of heaven is like seed that has been sown on good soil.

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Young children can be most open to the meaning of Jesus' parables. In the parable of the sower, we can easily find a metaphor for what it means to be open to hearing the Word of God.

### Materials Needed

- A packet of seeds and four different pots—one with good soil, one with stones, one with other plants in it, and one with sand

### Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Show the group the four pots that you have brought.  
Ask volunteers to describe what they see in each of the pots.  
Now show the group the packet of seeds.  
Say: ***I would like to plant some seeds, but I am not sure which of these pots I should use. Let's see if you can help me.***
2. First, take the pot with the sand. Ask: ***What do you think will happen if I try to plant the seeds in this pot?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.)
3. Second, take the pot with the rocks. Ask: ***What do you think will happen if I try to plant the seeds in this pot?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.)
4. Third, take the pot with other plants in it. Ask: ***What do you think will happen if I try to plant the seeds in this pot?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.)
5. Finally, take the pot with the good soil. Ask: ***What do you think will happen if I try to plant the seeds in this pot?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.)
6. Say: ***You all know so much about seeds. Which pot would be best for planting seeds?*** (the pot with the good soil)  
***Jesus told us what the kingdom of heaven is like using a story—a parable—that talked about soil and seeds. Let's listen carefully to this Gospel.***
7. Read the Gospel in its short form, Matthew 13:1-9.
8. Say: ***In this parable, Jesus wanted to teach us that God's love can take root in us if we are open to all that God teaches. If we are like the good soil, God will use us to produce much good!***
9. Say: ***Let's pray together that we will be open to all that God teaches us so that God's Word can take root in us and grow.*** Pray together the Lord's Prayer.

## Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)



### Gospel Reading

*Matthew 13:1-23 (shorter form: Matthew 13:1-9)*

Jesus teaches that the kingdom of heaven is like seed that has been sown on good soil.

The parable of the sower encourages children to reflect on how they approach their faith. Older children can be invited to open their hearts so that the Word of God can take root in them and produce abundant fruit.

### Materials Needed

- None

### Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Say: ***Sometimes communication is difficult because we do not, or cannot, accept a message that was spoken to us. Let me give you some examples so that you know what I mean.***
2. Say: ***One message that may be spoken to you is “clean your room.” What are some of the ways in which you respond when this message is spoken to you?*** (Accept all reasonable answers, noting how the disposition of the hearer changes the response.)
3. Say: ***Another message that we receive often is “don’t worry about it.” What are some ways in which you might respond to this message?*** (Accept all reasonable answers, noting again how the disposition of the hearer changes the way in which the message is received.)
4. Say: ***In today’s Gospel, Jesus offers a parable to show how different people hear the message about the Kingdom of God. Let’s listen carefully to this Gospel.***
5. Invite several volunteers to read today’s Gospel, Matthew 13:1-23
6. Say: ***Note that in the parable, the message about the kingdom of heaven is the same; no differences among the seeds are noted. But the result in each case is very different, depending upon how the message is received. Jesus wants us to be like good soil in which the seed can bear abundant fruit.***
7. Ask: ***What are some things that we can do so that we are like the good soil, able to hear and accept God’s Word about the kingdom of heaven?*** (prayer, reading the Bible, being attentive to religious instruction)
8. Conclude in prayer together, asking God to help us to become good soil so that his Word can take root and produce abundant fruit. Pray together the Lord’s Prayer or today’s Psalm, Psalm 65.

## Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 7, 8, and 9)



### Gospel Reading

*Matthew 13:1-23 (shorter form: Matthew 13:1-9)*

Jesus teaches that the kingdom of heaven is like seed that has been sown on good soil.

Young people at this age often express themselves in the creative ways they accessorize and decorate their jackets, backpacks, shoes, and so on. Encourage them to think about how they can use that same creativity to express their faith.

### Materials Needed

- Construction paper with a small dot made with a pencil point or marker in the centre of each sheet
- Markers, crayons, or coloured pencils

### Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Say: ***Today we are going to do an imaginative exercise. There is no right or wrong way to do it. Therefore, don't think too much about it; just do it.***
2. Explain that in this Sunday's Gospel, we hear one of Jesus' most famous parables, the parable of the sower and the seed.
3. Say: ***Imagine that the dot on your paper is a seed. Draw around the dot a representation of how your faith is growing. What colours will you choose? What shapes or images?***
4. After the drawings are complete, ask volunteers to show what they have drawn.
5. Ask each volunteer why he or she chose the colours, shapes, or representations that he or she did. What did he or she want to say about his or her faith?
6. Have a volunteer read aloud the Gospel Matthew 13:1-23.
7. Ask: ***What type of soil do you think your faith is growing in? Do you need to change it? If so, how might you?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.)
8. Say: ***Let's pray that in the days ahead our lives will become the good soil needed for God's Word to take root.***
9. Conclude this time together by praying this Sunday's Psalm, Psalm 65:10-14.

## Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Making the Connection Family Connection

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### Gospel Reading

*Matthew 13:1-23 (shorter form: Matthew 13:1-9)*

Jesus teaches that the kingdom of heaven is like seed that has been sown on good soil.

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Today's Gospel reminds us that ***in order for God's Word to take root in us and produce abundant fruit, we must endeavour to be like good soil.***

Families, in particular, hold the responsibility for ***"preparing the soil"*** so that the seeds of God's Word can grow strong.

There are many ways in which families do this—family traditions in which faith is celebrated, prayer and reading of Scripture, and instruction on the faith. In these ways, parents fulfil the promises they made at their child's Baptism.

Gather together as a family and reflect together on the Sacrament of Baptism.

Tell the story of the Baptism of each child, showing any pictures that were taken.

If you have your child's Baptism candle or gown, share these as well.

Recall together that one of the promises that parents make at their child's Baptism is to bring them up in the practice of our faith. Talk together about the importance of this promise to your family.

Then read together today's ***Gospel, Matthew 13:1-23.***

Reflect together on the ways in which your family practices your faith (daily prayer, Mass attendance, religious instruction, etc.).

***Remind one another that we do these things as a family so that God's Word can take root in our lives and produce abundant fruit.***

Conclude in prayer together by praying today's ***Psalm, Psalm 65.***