**15th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [13th July, 2014]**

READINGS: Isaiah 55:10-11 / Romans 8:18-23/ Matthew 13:1-23

THEME: RECEIVING THE WORD OF GOD

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

The Word of God, according to the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, comes down like rainfall for a purpose (Is. 55:10-11). With this imagery of rainfall (first reading), the message of Jesus Christ in the gospel reading can be re-presented as follows. In a village, where there was no pipe-borne water, there were four men (A, B, C and D) who had different attitudes towards the harvesting of rain water. A, who was used to fetching water from a stream at the outskirts of the village, did not bother about harvest rain water. B was interested in collecting rain water, but he did so with a leaky bucket. C’s container was not leaky but it had no covering so the water he collected was often contaminated. D, the wisest among the four men, harvested rain water into a 1,000-gallon tank that was in good condition and well-covered.

Now, the rain water is the Word of God. Indeed more than rainfall, God showers unto us His Word in abundance (in the Bible, during personal reading of the Bible, at Mass, during Bible study sessions, on the Internet, etc.). In other words, the Word of God is never in short supply. God’s Word is always available to bless us. But what is our attitude towards receiving God’s Word? The above story about the four men may reveal our manner of receiving the Word.

Let us begin with the first man, A. His lack of interest in harvesting the rain water was due to his uninformed conviction that the water of the village stream had been used by his ancestors and none of them died from drinking it. He was oblivious to the fact that over the years the grazing of animals, the dumping of refuse and mining activities had polluted the water. Similarly if in the pursuit of academic or professional knowledge, we neglect the Word of God, or if we are ignorant of the Word of God (because we take no time to read and meditate on it), then we are like A. Here, it is worthwhile recalling the caution of St. Jerome who says that “ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” Furthermore, we become like A whenever we are not attentive during the readings and preaching of the Word (at Mass).

B, as we said, collects the water with a leaky bucket. He does not retain much of the water. Similarly, if we receive the Word with instant feeling of joy and edification, but soon forget it, or abandon its commandments during difficult times (i.e. trials and temptations), then we are like B. That is, our minds and hearts become like leaky containers that are not able to retain the showers of the saving Word of God.

C’s container, we said, had no covering so the water he collected was often contaminated. Similarly, those of us who have not covered the containers of our minds and hearts with Divine grace often allow the “cares of this world and the delights of riches” (Mt. 13:22) to “contaminate” the purity of the Word. An example is a Christian who observes a regular quiet time to read and meditate on the Word, yet he/she is involved in a corrupt/illegal business so as to maintain a high social status.

Beloved, let us learn from D. He harvested rain water into a big tank that was in good condition and well-covered. Similarly, let us first use all the good avenues available to receive the Word. That is, let us have regular quiet times (at least 15 mins.) to read and meditate on the Word; let us be attentive during the readings and homily at Mass; let us access sound teachings on the Word from the Internet, etc. Secondly, unlike B, let us seal the leakages created by trials and temptations with constant (personal/family/communal) prayers. Thirdly, unlike C, let us overcome the contaminations of social pressure and the lure of ill-gotten wealth, by covering ourselves with Divine graces which flow abundantly to those who maintain a close personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way, every blessing that God has purposed for every Word we read or hear shall be multiplied 30-fold, 60-fold or 100-fold in our lives (Mt. 13:8, 23)! Amen!