

FATHER MARK SCHULTE
HOMILY
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
JULY 12, 2026

“Renew the Heart”

My brothers and sisters, throughout the world, in different places and times, natural disasters have occurred such as terrible floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes and droughts. In a quiet moment we might ponder these things. We may question as to why such natural disasters even occur at all. Our first reading of Paul’s letter to the Romans gives us some insight into this question. Paul said: “The whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God, for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rm 8:18-23) (CCC 2630).

Paul said that someone subjected creation to this corruption (death). The one Paul is speaking of is Adam. The destiny of man and creation are closely associated with each other. God placed all of creation under the authority of Adam. When Adam sinned and then brought sin and death into the world, death not only affected man, but all of creation as well (CCC 385-412). Before Adam sinned creation was in perfect order, it did not rebel against man. But with Adam’s sin, and sin is a disordered act, disorder entered into human nature and in the natural world. The natural order has now become disordered, broken, and subject to chaos and death. Because of Adam’s sin, the ground is now cursed. When Adam works the soil, it will bring forth thorns and thistles (Gn 3:17-18). And thus all the natural disasters that occur take place because of the disorder that sin brings into the world.

One day this disorder will be rectified, nature will be restored back to its original order, and there will be peace and harmony once again on earth. Peter speaks of this restored order in 2 Pt 3:1-13. He calls it a “New Heaven and a New Earth in which righteousness dwells”. This renewal will occur when Jesus returns again (Rev 21:1, 27) (CCC 1042-1050). But until then we live in a broken world, in a broken body, through natural disasters and physical ailments and death.

This disordered creation is described by Jesus in the Gospel in the parable of the sower and the seed (Mt. 13: 1-23) (CCC 546). In a perfect world without sin all the seeds would land on good soil and produce an abundant crop. But we don’t live in a perfect world. We live in a world damaged by sin. This is represented by the different soil conditions, hard soil, rocks, and thistles. These three conditions also represent the broken heart and mind of a man. Because his heart and mind are broken as a result of sin he struggles to understand. Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah in describing this situation such that even though they listen and look, they still can’t understand because their hearts and minds are sluggish and they really don’t want to understand because it would call for a conversion of heart. And they don’t want that (Is 6:9-10). Their hearts and minds are closed off; their will is weak. The three adverse soil conditions describe this situation.

The person who understands this will take measures to mitigate it. He understands that he needs God's help to overcome his brokenness. He prepares his heart and mind in advance to hear and understand God's Word. He will do this through prayer, the sacraments, and the power of the Holy Spirit, whose task it is to renew all things that are damaged by sin. "Come Holy Spirit... Renew the face of the earth" (Ps 104:30).

The Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, and all the saints are examples of all those who have through God's grace overcome the effects of a broken world. Call upon them daily in your time of need in order to become good soil for the Word.

CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church