

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (Year A)
7-12-2026 Homily

I. Introduction

Temple University in Philadelphia is the third largest university in Pennsylvania; it enjoys a worldwide reputation for research, scholarship, and education, and has international campuses in Tokyo and Rome, in addition to several here in the United States. The official story of its founding states that it was established in 1884 by a Baptist minister who had served as a Union officer during the American Civil War; however, there's also an unofficial story of its founding, and that's more inspiring and impressive. A little girl in Philadelphia wanted to attend Sunday school at the very small and overcrowded neighborhood church, but was unable to do so because the classes were full. As a result, she began saving pennies so a larger church could be built, but sadly, she died of a serious illness about a year later. Under her pillow her parents found a small red pocketbook, or purse, containing 57 pennies, along with a note explaining why she was saving the money. At her funeral her pastor told this story, which was then reported in the city newspapers, and quickly circulated among the residents of Philadelphia and its suburbs.

The girl's simple generosity touched many hearts and inspired numerous donations, and within six years the then-huge amount of \$250,000 had been raised, making possible the founding and ongoing expansion of Temple University (Gerard Fuller, O.M.I., *Stories for All Seasons*, p. 32). Today this revered institution has seventeen schools and colleges with over 30,000 students, over 350,000 alumni, the highly-regarded Good Samaritan Hospital, eighteen NCAA Division I varsity sports teams, and an endowment of over \$1 billion. All this began with a donation of 57 cents; in effect, this was the seed money that brought forth a rich harvest. Over the centuries many wealthy and influential persons have accomplished great things in a worldly sense, but these achievements will sooner or later pass away and be forgotten. However, those who serve the Lord in a spirit of generosity and trust can unlock oceans of grace and create a legacy of blessings that will last forever.

II. Development

Because God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving, it is an easy thing for Him to work miracles and bring about wonderful results beyond our imagining; as He says in the 1st Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, His creating word achieves its purpose and blesses His people. However, the Lord respects our free will and does not force us to cooperate with His plan. The misuse of human freedom results in sin and tragedy; that's why St. Paul speaks of creation being subject to futility, and thereby experiencing slavery and corruption. Jesus came to rescue us from this wretched state, redeeming us from our sins and giving meaning to our sufferings and trials. This can only happen, however, if we're willing to receive and cooperate with His grace—and that's the point of Our Lord's parable in the Gospel. There is nothing wrong with the seed sown by the sower or farmer; everything depends on the type of soil where it lands. Persons symbolized by the footpath, the rocky ground, or the soil covered by thorns, are unwilling to let the word of God make a true and lasting difference in their lives; only those represented by the fertile ground are capable of bringing forth a rich harvest. This is the spirit in which Jesus invites and challenges us to live.

III. Conclusion

In the 1970s there was a movie called *Oh, God!* It starred John Denver as a good but confused supermarket manager trying to figure out his purpose in life, and George Burns as Almighty God Himself appearing in human form. One line from the climax of that movie has always stayed with me. God announced to the world, “I know these are difficult times in which to have faith—but maybe if you had the faith to start with, the times would change.” That’s a simple but profound idea, and it ties right in with Jesus’ parable of the sower. If, instead of complaining about the state of the world—a very understandable and easy thing to do—we started sowing seeds of hope and love on every possible occasion, we might be very pleasantly surprised with the results.

If, for instance, we see someone lonely or discouraged, and take the time to really listen and sincerely express our support and willingness to help, that may be the ray of hope that encourages the person to persevere—and if he or she discovers that our motivation for assisting was our faith in Jesus, it might even lead to the conversion of someone who would otherwise have been lost for all eternity. If we said to a young man, “You, know, you might make a good priest,” or to a young woman, “Have you ever considered a vocation as a religious sister?,” that might plant a seed that, watered by divine grace, grows into years of fruitful ministry on behalf of the Lord and His Church. If we choose to forgive someone who’s always nasty and ill-tempered, instead of lashing out or ignoring that person, that might be so unexpected that it provokes some serious thinking on that person’s part, eventually leading to sincere repentance and the winning of another soul for Christ.

God delights in bringing forth great results from tiny beginnings, and each one of us is capable of playing a valuable and irreplaceable role in this process. Every day we are given opportunities to make a difference. Few, if any, of us would claim to be saints, evangelists, or miracle-workers—but all of us are capable of bringing forth a harvest of thirty, sixty, or a hundred-fold, just by surrendering ourselves completely into the Lord’s hands and asking for His grace and guidance all the days of our lives. Only in Heaven will we fully understand the role we were assigned to play in the unfolding of God’s plan of salvation, and there we will rejoice that we were allowed to help make a lasting difference.