

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 12, 2026

Dear brothers and sisters, the scriptures are so rich. There are many things that we can preach on. For instance, it might be a little confusing as it sounds like Jesus is saying that he is closing the ears and the eyes so they don't hear and see, and then they won't be converted. Which begs the question, then why is he here, right? However, we know that is not true, because Christ came to give us the Holy Spirit. And without the Holy Spirit, we do not have eyes to see the Word and ears to hear it. We just have human understanding.

Jesus compared his word, the Word of God, to a seed and it is a beautiful image that both have the potential to grow and enrich. Like all words, they take root and can go in our hearts. And when finally, one is to consider the type of soil, and what they're trying to grow, so they can see if it works with the seeds they are planting. There are some grounds that are conducive to growing certain seeds and others fight against those. Thus, it is important for us to be careful about what or whom we listen to. We are to pay attention to the words we are allowed to take root in our hearts. The soil we have here, a worldly soil, a fallen away soil which is not conducive to the word of God. The soil that is conducive to the Word of God is not conducive to the world.

Now, today, Christ is talking specifically about his Word and the ground in which his present seed is sown, which is a humble, contrite heart. Humility. Humility, recognizing who we are in relationship to God, humble being to him and humble service to our

fellow men. And contrition which is more than just sorrow about doing wrong.

Within the human heart there are some who are conducive to growing the word of God, others fight against it. Importantly, in our fallen and human nature, we are not one way or the other. We are not perfect. We are being perfected, which means we are on a journey towards growing closer to God with each step. With each day, in heaven, we will be perfect, cured.

We have some soil in our heart that is resisting God's mind. Now, the Gospel illustrates types of soil that are resistant to God. Soil that is unfruitful comes from three main sources: the devil and his followers, the flesh and the world. Whereas a fruitful source comes from one source - God who is the source of all good. And it's found to those who are open and responsive to his Word.

The devil represented by the bird eats the seed along the path. But it's only our human understanding alone "Do you not understand what God is trying to say when he's speaking to our heart", when he catches away, he will not waste an opportunity to immediately comes out to a God Christ to give us. We see this in the Scripture with Peter. "*You are in the rock, and upon you of in our church*", and then two sentences, three sentences later. "*Get behind me Satan.*" Peter did not understand he was speaking through a hardened heart.

The devil is real, brothers and sisters, and many in our culture try to deny it. What a trick he has played on us in our world- to deny evil - because if we don't see it, we don't see a need to prepare ourselves. We need to train to grow in holiness. We ought to see a need to fight.

By the way, the Church, the part of Christ that is on Earth, is called The Church Militant. Our enemy is Satan. Satan influenced our first parents - Adam and Eve. He successfully intentioned them to disobey God's commandment thereby breaking off their friendship to God. Satan wants to do the same to us. He wants to do the same thing. He's trying to influence our mind. He separated us from the love of God to get us ultimately to break the First Commandment. The First Commandment is "To love our Father with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength and all our being." He wants us separated from God. Communion means union with but if we are not in communion, we are not in union. He doesn't have to get us to worship false gods; he just has to get us to stop worshiping the true God. And he's very cunning.

He tries to influence our mind. You say little things, like, "God won't mind if you have a little fun now. Sow your oats, have your wild time. He wants you to be happy, doesn't he? He made us; this is good. You don't really need the Sacraments. You can just go to God directly, all by yourself. You don't need this church. You don't need to go to Mass today. You have guests over." Or you are on vacation, "Just relax and enjoy yourself. God wants you to be happy. You are tired. But God's doesn't want you to be all exhausted." How about this one? "The Church just needs to be with the time." Satan tries many ways to get us away.

The devil uses subtle deceptions to uproot our friendship, he tries to get us to choose his self-centered life over a Christian center of life, or a sacrificial life, humble beings, humble servants. Bishop Sheen observed that before the sin, each time, before the sin, Satan assures us that it is a no consequence. After the sin, he persuades

us that the sin is unforgivable. Look at Adam and Eve. “Surely you won't die. He just doesn't want you to be like him. You'll be as smart as he is.” And after this in, they hide from God. And they ran from God because of the sin and the rebellion. This is what Satan does.

Before the sin, Satan represents himself as a friend of man urging him on to the goal. “Well, the Church is behind the time – it doesn't want you to be happy. It is stuck. It is a false belief that deliverance is possible. But after what you did, you can't be forgiven” Guess what? We now have a hard time going back to the confession - like I'm going to the principal's office to get our spiritual spanking. Look at the Cross - God paid the price for our sin, and it draws us closer to God. The sacrament of Confession cannot be a punishment. God is our reward.

Bishop Sheen continues and he notes that to doubt forgiveness is the beginning of hell. To doubt God's love and mercy is to stay separated from him which is the beginning of hell.

The second influence is what Paul calls the flesh. We each have a particular part that draws away from God due to our fallen human nature. We are not one and done. These are the rocks in our soil. They can be tiled out. Our tendency to commit sins are the rocks of our soil in our heart. They are removed with God's help in the sacrament life in the Church: Baptism, Confession, through prayer, fasting, and alms giving. With these, and with God's graces, we remove the rocks from our soul. By the way, we put them back when we commit sin. It is not a one and done. Confession is not a one and done. It is a journey across hell.

Now, the third influence is the world. The culture around us, which is a product of human, fallen human nature, is represented by a thorn. This fallen world promises perfect happiness, and money, and cheapness, popularity, or passing pleasures, in all things except God. “You can get there on your own, by yourself, without him.” These are false promises because God, who is the source of all happiness, joy, and love, he alone satisfies the human heart. St. Augustine says, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

Significantly, we hear about the heart which is conducive to the Word of God and produces much fruit. It is a humble, contrite heart. Humility is recognizing who we are in relationship to God, and that we need his help to mend our life. We cannot do it on our own. How many times we say, “I’ve tried to stop this vice.” I tried to do this. “I, I, I.” You are right, we cannot. He needs his graces to open our eyes and ears, and we may see and hear him working through his Church. During Christ’s ministry they did not have the Holy Spirit in them; thus, they could not hear God’s word. That doesn’t mean they didn’t have the opportunity to respond to the Gospel. Obviously, the apostles did. The disciples did.

Brothers and sisters, importantly, there’s a difference between contrition and remorse. Remorse is a feeling of regret or sadness for doing something wrong for sinning. “Whereas contrition is regret for sin, but it is a real that leads to repentance, turning back to God. To you alone have I sinned.” We can see a contrast between remorse and contrition. King Saul, remorseful at the loss of his kingdom that he lost in a disobedience to God, didn’t say, “I’m sorry, I regret it.” Ahab did some pretty, bad evil things. He did rent his garments and have an act of contrition. And David, who murdered someone and

covered it up, he had a humble and contrite heart. How about the difference between Judas who lost his apostleship and Peter who ran to Christ on the water?

There's a difference between remorse and contrition. Contrition is a desire to never sin again. Now, we know we have a fallen human nature. It's not, "I can go to confessions, so I can sin again." By the way, the grace of confession is not so we can receive Holy Communion. Holy Communion is the effect. The grace of confession is final repentance, and we turn back completely to God, and to virtue which means we have to do it multiple times.

This soil of a humble contrite heart receives the Word, keeps it and acts on it and this person can bear much fruit. Our Lord desires that he sees that his fruit - love, and mercy - take root, and grow in every heart, family, community, starting with our own heart, and our own parish family. Our Lord wants the soul of our hearts to be perfect and so out of love for us, the Father has provided for us his help in these Sacraments of the Church. Again, in Baptism, through which we receive the Holy Spirit and His grace. It is in the Holy Spirit that we have eyes to see and ears to hear and understanding in our heart that we may be converted in Christ, heal us. And through the Sacrament of Confession, we are reunited to the divine life as proposed after original sin, which separates us from the love of God and through worthy and frequent reception of the Holy Communion we are nourished by the body, blood, soul, and divinity, of God himself, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Today, we ask out for this grace, that we may continue to amend our lives, that we may constantly have the eyes and ears of our hearts,

and minds open to Christ's understanding. And in Jesus, may he continue to take root in our hearts, growing and producing much fruit – thirty-fold or more.