

Call to Worship - Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 16, 2017

Maureen F McDermott

Today's gospel reading is Matthew's telling of the Parable of the Sower, one of several parables Jesus told one day, and one so familiar to us that we run the risk of going off into space and missing the point altogether. And that would be a shame. I'd like to suggest an approach this time round that you might find useful, not only today, but at any time that you might be hearing, or perhaps even reading a portion of the gospels.

In Father James Martin's book, *Jesus, a Pilgrimage*, the author describes his discovery of "the Bay of Parables," a location on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, where it is very likely that Jesus delivered this parable as well as the others in this "day of parables." The water, the shore, features of the surrounding terrain, all appeared in Jesus' storytelling. It didn't take much for me to put myself into that scene. How would it be if you were to imagine yourself listening to the Parable of the Sower right on this spot, as one of the people gathered that day, -one of the crowd, or perhaps one of the disciples? Is it possible that you might be hearing it again as if it were for the first time? Jesus concludes the narrative, "Whoever has ears to hear should hear." How might you be hearing/receiving this word today?

We are given a kind of "heads-up" by Isaiah in the first reading. Referring to the seed planted in fertile soil, the prophet speaks the message of the Lord, "thus shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it." May we be truly ready to listen.

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