

*The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.*

## 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year A

IS 55:10-11, PS 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14, ROM 8:18-23, MT 13:1-23



Dcn. Frank Sila  
7/16/2017

Good evening. In our readings and Gospel, we hear references to God nurturing the soil and creation, with water and Word. Hearing this I imagine a farmer going out to his field and scooping up a handful of earth feeling the consistency. Finally, he brings it to his nose to smell the organic decomposition. Slowly, he lets it fall through his fingers, thinking, “This is rich and fertile soil.”

At the end of June, we had a few days of spectacular weather. The evening temperatures were in the mid 50’s and the daytime high was 73 or so. A night of rest with open windows is restorative. The cool of the morning always seems to bring a freshness and clarity of thought.

On one of those mornings, I finished some work here at church and ran into one of our parishioners. The weekend before, she, and a number of others, had prepared the food after each mass for Sr. Pam’s farewell reception. I thanked her for her work. She said that she was happy to help as she could. One thought soon led to another and we shared a wonderful conversation about the many ministries here at St. Toms. She commented that it would be hard for someone to come to St. Tom’s and not be able to find a way to serve and meet people. She remarked that we have over 60 different ministries at St Tom’s and began to describe the reward of being part of that. I listened carefully. Perhaps it was all that fresh air from the night before that fueled my imagination. Her story painted a mental image of a mountain range wrapping about a lush valley. Each ministry she described became a waterfall splashing from the mountains above into the valley below. The valley held our St. Tom’s community and the water from the falls gathered as a river nurturing the land. The water was the grace that flowed from our various ministries.

Our service to others lies at the heart and soul of our community. It is in our care for those on the periphery of life, those who are hurting and disillusioned that we encounter the Sacred.

St. Tom's is not about me. It is not about Deacon Joe, Lisa, Michael or Fr. Dan. It is not about Sr. Pam or Fr. Ken. St. Tom's is more than that. St. Tom's is the fertile rich soil that we hear of in today's Gospel. Soil, made fertile, because we have heard God's Word and the call to move beyond ourselves.

A rancher once explained that there are two ways to keep the cows in. One is to build lots of fences, gates and cattle guards. The other is to keep a really good source of food and water at the center of the ranch. A community is sort of like that. Rather than having too many fences and gates to hold people in or lock people out, St. Tom's prefers a good source of food at the center.<sup>1</sup> Our simple meal is bread, wine, and the stories that we share of living and growing with each other and those that we serve. We gather these stories, our hopes and frustrations, our joys and sorrows, bringing them to the altar as our offertory. In the Eucharist, the Lord's face becomes a little clearer, and so, we gather each week to celebrate God with us.

Some leave our community to work and study elsewhere. Some are called home to their final rest. New faces come to pray with us. We are graced by the sound of children at our liturgy and are moved by a couple bringing their newborn for the first time. This is the Paschal mystery: life, death and resurrection. In this mystery, our community is renewed. In this mystery, the soil is turned over and prepared to receive new seeds of faith.

The good ground of the St. Tom's community is a precious gift meant to be shared. We are a student parish. All people, but especially the students we are called to serve, need to be able to plant the seeds of their faith here at St. Toms. Our mission statement sums it quite nicely.

*We, the people of St. Thomas More Parish, gifted and led by the Holy Spirit, are called to build up the Kingdom of God among the college communities of Kalamazoo. Diverse, yet one, we are called to be the Body of Christ, to praise and worship our heavenly Father, to proclaim God's Word, to love and serve others, especially the poor and neglected. We welcome into our parish family all who wish to share in this mission.*

*Then the Lord reaches down and gathers a handful of soil from the field that is St. Toms. He feels the texture and after smelling it, he smiles and prays softly, "Father, This is rich and fertile soil. I can plant here and it will bear fruit a hundredfold."*

May God in his abundance continue to bless our community.

## Works Cited

1. (2017, July 13). Retrieved from The Simple Way: <http://www.thesimpleway.org/about/>

All scripture quotations are taken from;. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB.

I welcome your questions and comments. My email is [fsila@sttomskazoo.org](mailto:fsila@sttomskazoo.org). (n.d.).