

“The Sower and the Seed”

Sometimes, even merely spoken words can have an extraordinary life-span. Sometimes we remember things our parents said, long after they are gone; their words are not dead so long as we are alive and recall them.

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Today’s gospel is a story about God’s extravagant generosity and His boundless love. The sower, in today’s gospel doesn’t discriminate, doesn’t pick and choose. He scatters his seeds – His Word, His Truth – anywhere and everywhere. He doesn’t hold back. He is generous beyond measure with what he has to offer. He knows that it will somehow reach the richest soil. It might even be in the most unexpected of places.

I think of one of the mystics of 20th c, Thomas Merton – a jazz-loving, cigarette-smoking, girl-chasing writer who drifted from being an indifferent Protestant to a communist – and then, in the middle of his wanderings, discovered the poetry of the Catholic writer William Blake. That led him to explore the Catholic Church and eventually to convert. He fell deeply in love with God. Merton became a Trappist monk and writer. He stands today as one of the influential Catholic writers of the 20th century. Even among the thorns of Merton’s confused and complicated life, God’s seed, His word found rich soil. *(It happens again and again in our history – from St. Paul to St. Augustine, to St. Ignatius to Dorothy Day and beyond. The soil they sprang from wasn’t always ideal.)*

We are a church of rocks and thorns, besieged by birds – and yet, amid this vast and surprising garden, God’s smallest seeds find fertile ground. His Word takes root. All that matters is: How are our hearts?

Today we celebrate our patronal feast. St. Bonaventure is one of the greatest minds the Church ever produced. He received the seed of

God's word in the fertile soil of his heart and produced 100-fold. He combined a love for truth with love for God in exceptional way, and knew how to harmonize holiness and wisdom, to be deeply spiritual and eminently theological.

At the age of 40, St. Boni- became the Minister General of the Fran Order, then spread throughout Europe; but with many serious issues within the Order. Bonaventure is called the *second founder of the Franciscans* because he was able to guide the community through important matters of interpretation about the way of life they should lead, in the way of St. Francis.

His theology was marked by an attempt to integrate faith and reason. He thought of Christ as the "one true master" who offers humans knowledge that begins in faith, is developed through rational understanding, and is perfected by mystical union with God.

One of His major works, "The journey of mind into God" focused on the perfection of Christian life: – not by renouncing the world like a monk, but by simply doing ordinary things of our daily life very well. "The perfection of a religious person is to do common things in a perfect manner," he wrote. "A constant fidelity in small things is a great and heroic virtue. So, Bonaventure dedicated even more time to prayer than he did to his study, and people could feel a deep, inward peace about him. He was always cheerful, and once said, "A spiritual joy is the greatest sign of the divine grace dwelling in a soul."

His great wisdom made him greatly humble, to be called 'Seraphic Doctor'. There is the story of St Bonaventura receiving his Cardinal's hat. He was doing the dishes and an envoy from the Pope arrived with the red hat. Bonaventure said, "When I'm done with the dishes, I will receive you." Such was his humility. Let us learn from our patron saint, the way to holiness and grow in love for truth. Amen.