

If you could live your life over again and could be any one of the hundreds of famous people in the world, who would you want to be? Each one of us would have a different answer. George Bernard Shaw answered this question in this way. He said, “I would want to be the man George Shaw could have been, but never was.” Being satisfied with what we have is much different than being satisfied with who we are. The soil of our lives can and must be coaxed, watered and changed. If we, like George Bernard Shaw, are to become the disciple we are meant to be.

Fertility of heart is what is needed in order that our ears may hear and absorb the privilege of discipleship. Fertility of heart is allowing our hearts to be coaxed, watered, and changed. To recognize that at various times in our lives, we are like all three different kinds of soil. At one point, we might be the rocky soil. At another point, we didn't even have a chance to grow; the difficulties of life snatched the seeds of faith right out of our hands. At other times, we are the good soil. Our hearts are ready. Our soil is turned over, fertilized, watered, and every Word we hear proclaimed from scripture comes alive for us, and we bear a great harvest in our lives. Just as there is no warranty on our physical health, likewise there is no warranty on our spiritual health. There are times when we are not receptive to tilling and preparing the soil of our life. When life difficulties, prejudices, long-held personal beliefs harden us against the ability to become the good soil. We can remain stagnant and we will not bear good fruit.

Sometimes, we may be under the false impression that we are at our spiritual peak. That we have arrived. No more growth is needed. That can be called complacency. To fertilize our heart, we must take care of our spiritual health allowing ourselves to be lead beyond satisfaction with what is and search for that which we could be. To search for ways to grow in our faith and to bear good fruit in our lives.

To help us with our growth, requires some soul searching? Becoming rich soil in our lives will require some effort. What will help us in our personal faith growth? Have we asked the questions lying quietly in our hearts that are holding us back from moving forward? Have we prayed, asking God, what needs to happen in our personal lives to become rich soil?

Jesus told the disciples that their eyes and ears were blessed because they were physically present with him. We are physically in the presents of the person of Jesus right here today. In the Word of God proclaimed, in the people present at Mass sitting right next to us, in our Presider, Fr. Simoneau/Fr. Felix, and in the Body and Blood of Jesus we will receive at Holy Communion. This awareness should spur us on to the better soil of seeking God in all of our lives, in all of creation.

Spiritual growth cannot be counted or measured. How do we know when we've moved from an inferior soil to a better soil? We can know there is movement when

God's word no longer falls on deaf ears. Hearing is done by the ear. Listening happens only in the heart. Our hearts become open to love. God made His word for us, His people; we need to listen for it to take root in us. People are made for God's word; we can only bear fruit through it.

Through God's Word we listen to the message of Jesus, "To love: to love your neighbor as yourself..... to serve others: the last will be first....To believe: .become like a little child..."

Our culture, the everyday world we live in often give us a different message: "Look out for number one.... Money buys happiness.... Do anything to get to the top...." If we choose to believe the message of our culture, we cannot grow into rich soil. Where there is no growth, there can be no new life.

Most of us know that we have been one or more of the first three types of soil at one time or another in our lives. We don't want soil to stay hardened, rocky or unproductive. We want to grow. We want our lives to bear the good fruit of a strong faith in Jesus Christ. Growth can be painful and frightening. But, it can also be energizing and eagerly anticipated. If the seed is not stunted by resistance to change, the fertile ground will openly accept it. Our hearts become open to love.

Jesus told us this simple parable that speaks of the miraculous power of God present in the ministry of Jesus. The astonishing success represented by seed that yields an almost impossible amount, a hundredfold, suggests to us that God's grace, will overcome opposition to the Gospel and ensure the dramatic growth of the Kingdom of God.

You and I, like all good farmers who continually face floods and disasters of every sort, need to seriously engage ourselves in the enterprise of faith and hope, planting what we have, planting the best of what we have, and then letting God's sun, wind, and gentle rains do the rest. God's only-begotten Son, along with the gentle breath of His Holy Spirit, provide waters of grace to nourish and sustain what He has planted in the lives of those we love. If we cooperate with God, and work with Him, then the promise of Jesus will come true in our lives. *"But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."*