

**Reflection on the Gospel- Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A  
(Matthew 13:1-23 or 13:1-9)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

One of the privileges of my life has been an ongoing involvement in Catholic education, especially in religious and theological education. While my connection now is somewhat removed from the day to day life of schools, I am keenly aware of the selfless dedication of leadership and staff in their efforts to create environments for the children and young adults in our communities to receive God's word in its multi-layered reality. A sense of wonder and appreciation of the goodness of creation, of respect for the human and the more-than-human Earth community, is at the heart of any truly worthwhile education. The experience of violence or broken trust in the lives of some children may inhibit that sense of wonder and respect. The sensitive educator, at home and at school, is attuned to the diversity of experience among children and is called to attend to the inevitable diversity of needs so that all might be open to learn and to grow in wisdom and grace.

Jesus' parable of the soil, seed and sower reminds us that the grace of God's word is there for everyone who is open to receive it. If the seed takes root in rich soil, the harvest is assured. If it misses the mark and falls on the path, the benefit is for the birds alone and not for the human community. If the soil is rocky, the growth is premature and short-lived and the harvest is very limited, so that the birds are deprived along with the human community. If the seed falls among thorns, it is choked-so once again, there is no harvest. The readiness of the soil is all important, though the extraordinary extent of the yield is the measure of God's abundant grace.

This parable reflects Jesus' closeness to the whole Earth community and his familiarity with the lives of ordinary people. While scattering of seed before ploughing seems a rather wasteful method of sowing a crop, such a practice is attested in the ancient world. Is the sower an extraordinarily generous God or an exploitative and wasteful estate owner? Parables tease their hearers and invite them to ponder their many levels of meaning. We have to bring our own life experience into dialogue with the word of each parable and search out its meaning for us. When we consider our children, the parable of the soil, seed and sower may yield its wisdom more slowly than parents and teachers may wish. Young people tend to mature at different rates and their faith develops in myriad ways that only God as harvester truly comprehends. We do what we can and trust that God will ensure an abundant harvest.