

*Friday of week 16 in Ordinary Time*

Readings at mass - Jeremiah 3:14-17, Jeremiah 31:10-13, Matthew 13:18-23

By first accepting, and then submitting to the Word, to Jesus who knocks on the doors of our hearts, we can save our souls. What does 'saving our souls' mean other than to be in union with Christ? "But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him" (1 Cor 6:17). They who are noble and generous in heart yield a harvest through their perseverance. In the Gospel passage we see that this harvest produced is different in amounts, even for the different 'rich soil'.

God is constantly looking for this union, not for His sake but rather for ours, as He alone is our greatest good. "I alone am your Master" – if the Lord does not take this place, the other guy *will* take it. Jesus referred to satan as the thief who comes to "steal, kill and destroy" (Jn 10:10) and we see what specifically he is coming to steal: that which is worth much. The man who is barely on the path, "on the edge of the path" has the Word that sown in his heart stolen by the evil one. He is clearly devoid of understanding as he dips in and out of faith, "here a little, there a little" (Is 28:13).

They who treasure the Word greatly in their hearts, like Mary our mother, have the shepherd. Jesus who claimed to be the Good Shepherd said that His "sheep follow Him because they know His voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers" (Jn 10:4-5). He will gather His many 'nations' in His name and He will be present as He promised us – "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Mt 18:20).