

A Short Teaching on Roots
by Deacon Gerry Palermo

Greetings on the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

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

I want to share my planting two Allamanda bushes this year. I planted them facing west to receive a good amount of sunlight. New transplants require watering morning and evening. The plants struggled under the strong western sun. No matter the watering these plants were dying.

I transplanted them to a partly shady location and the plants would receive a less persistent sunlight. Again, watering morning and evening. The plants continued to struggle.

So I transplanted them again this time to a northern exposure. Here they would receive a few good hours of sunlight but with a denser shade in the afternoon. Again, watering morning and evening. The plants struggled much less but still failed to thrive.

Now that the sunlight was just right, I began to water the plants with a specific pattern. Each time I watered them, I would ring the plants with a circle of water, slowly larger and larger circle away from the root ball. Slowly the roots grew out to the water. The plants were no longer lethargic in the growth but thriving on the challenge of gaining root and water, at the same time.

Jesus taught in parables. Parables are teaching techniques that stretch the listener to move toward the truth. He isn't hiding in the sense of unattainable. He is hiding in the sense of growing a faith that thrives on the challenge of gaining reason and faith, at the same time. It is no coincidence that the Divine Revelation of Jesus Christ came only after the development of Greek philosophical thought which itself is a reaction to Greek mythological thought. It isn't until the Jewish experiential divinity and Greek intellectual reality meet and encounter one another does Jesus come – not because of it, but leveraging it for the divine purpose.

The parable today is helpful to assess the “Where am I?” of a single person. Like the Allamanda bush parable I used. When I hear the word of God – the sowing of the seed – how do I receive it? At first, like a path – too hardened to even respond. In time God tries again upon my rocky soil – I drink in but with no roots to grow. In time God tries again in the midst of my Thorns – I want to grow other things (worry, wealth). In time God tries again and I surrender. The good earth of the parable is the inner most groaning aka the ever present desire for truth in the person of God.

Where are your roots?

Peace be with you.

Deacon Gerry