



Fifth Sunday after Trinity, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Friends,

In today's gospel reading we hear the Parable of the Sower, which set me to thinking about the ways in which we sow seeds in our lives.

One of the first lectures I remember having at theological college was with Bishop Dominic Walker. He encouraged us to think about the importance of the term 'seminary', and to describe ourselves during our three year sentence at theological college as 'seminarians'.

'Seminary', means quite literally a place where seeds are planted and nurtured. It's a place not to try and run before you can walk, but to discover what aspects of Christian ministry interest and excite you and to begin a lifelong journey. His words were very wise for people who were probably overenthusiastic and believed that they were at seminary to learn everything they needed for ministry. There is no way that being at seminary can impart everything you need to know to be a deacon or priest, but his point was very simple: you don't stop learning. Three years of study is just a tiny part of an individual Christian journey. True, it is a time when you will be exposed to certain highly formative experiences, thoughts, studies and ideas, but it is just the beginning. It is the seed which must be fed, sustained, nurtured and brought to blossom and fruit later in your ministry.

Imagine making a firework: A rocket. You know exactly what sort of effect you want to create, what colours, how high it must go, and you pack all of those ingredients into a tiny space in a tube, knowing it's going to have to travel a long way up before it achieves the image in your mind. Seminary is like that. All

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those ingredients being crammed into a small space of time need time and space to come to fruition. Like planting bulbs, or an acorn, or baking a cake. We can't have the finished result without engaging with the process. Perhaps this lockdown time has been a time for seed sowing in your life? Perhaps it has been a time when you have made decisions now which will change your life in the long run. For example, maybe lockdown has made you decide to be more outgoing in the future. Or perhaps the opposite. Maybe you have enjoyed having the time to yourself to develop a personal discipline and want to build more time to read and pray into your routine when life returns to normal.

We know the parable in today's Gospel as the 'Parable of the Sower', but it could equally be called 'the Parable of the Seeds' or 'the parable of the Soils'. The seed represents God's word, but the soil is us. How we receive God's word and what we do with it depends whether we are the good fertile soil that brings the sower a worthy return on his crop.

With every blessing,

Fr Tom