

September 2014 – Staff Meeting Faith Formation The Parable of the Sower

Notes:

- Powerpoint is only one slide, a piece of artwork to focus reflection
- Choose readers who are good proclaimers. If you have a smaller number of speakers, they can double up, but they should not read two parts that are together so as not to lose the dialogue nature of the reflection.

Leader: As we move into the third year of our theological theme “Growing in Wisdom to Worship and Witness”, we are called to reflect deeply on what it means to be a witness to our faith. The kingdom of God is all around us, how do we build this kingdom through our witness?

For our reflection today we turn to a gift from the troubled history of Nicaragua. In 1966 a priest by the name of Ernesto Cardenal came to Solentiname, an archipelago of approximately 38 islands in Lake Nicaragua with a population of about 90 families—farmers, fisherfolk, and craftspeople.

Fr. Ernesto brought a very special practice to his celebration of Eucharist. Rather than preach a homily after the gospel, the people gathered about and discussed the reading. Because these dialogues were rooted in the lived lives of the people, they included much heartfelt wisdom. Fortunately for us, these dialogues were recorded and form a treasure of reflections which can deepen our own connection to faith.

Reader: A reading from Matthew.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: ‘Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!’

Reader: “You are *campesinos* (peasants) and you will be able to understand very well this parable of the seed.”

Reader: “The seed is a living thing. You don’t sow dead seeds. And so, as I see it, the message is a living thing.”

Reader: “The seed is also something to eat. People sow grains that feed us. The words of Jesus are grains that he scatters in the wind, to feed us all.”

Reader: “The seed is a tiny, wrinkled, ugly thing, and anyone who doesn’t know better might think that it’s useless. And it’s the same with the word of God, it seems to me, when the person that receives it doesn’t know what it contains.”

Reader: “And there’s another special thing about the seed, as I see it. It’s not only a living thing, but it’s the transmission of life.”

Reader: “We are all seeds. Seeds who produce more seeds.”

Reader: “Christ rose from the dead because he was a healthy seed. In the harvest we have seen that not every seed is born but only the good seeds, the nice healthy ones. And so, if we’re going to rise from the dead like Christ we must be the same kind of seed that he was.”

Reader: “I think that Jesus spoke of the seed because he was talking to us *campesinos*. If he had been talking for the rich he would have used examples that they would have understood very well. But he used this example of the seed because he was talking our language. He was talking about seeds and birds that eat the grains and plants that die of oversoaking and of swamps, because that’s our language.”

Reader: “And when we hear the message and we forget it, it’s like the corn that the birds ate. You sow now, and tomorrow when you go to look there’s nothing at all. The birds ate it all. The birds are the devil that carried off the message that had been sown.”

Reader: “If we hear these words the seed of the kingdom is buried in us, he says. But he speaks of the kingdom only for those who have ears.”

Reader: “I see one thing. The seed alone, without the land, doesn’t do anything. So this doctrine without US is of no use. Without US there is no kingdom of heaven.”

(Pause)

Leader: Loving and gracious God, as we move into this year of witness, may we be keenly aware of our call to build the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. May we be open to nurturing the seed of faith in our hearts that we may witness authentically to your great love and mercy.

We ask this in Jesus’ name, amen.

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All quotes from:

Scharper, Philip and Sally, editors. *The Gospel in Art by the Peasants of Solentiname*. (Orbis Books, 1984) (excerpted from *The Gospel in Solentiname* by Ernesto Cardenal)