

**07/13/14.....15 A**

-- *Is it worth it?* A mother of four grown children asks that question. She raised them in the Catholic Church, took them to Mass, made sure they attended religious education and received their sacraments. But now, only one of them practices the faith, and she may get to Mass perhaps once a month.

-- *Is it worth it?* A priest has just finished a marriage preparation session with a young couple. Like two thirds of the couples he's preparing, they are living together. It's convenient for them and, besides, everyone else is doing it. Faith is a pretty vague idea in their minds. He just doesn't seem to be getting through to them.

-- *Is it worth it?* The adult education director is finishing the latest Lenten series. She and her team worked on it diligently. A decent number of people showed up, but it seemed it was the same people who always do. They still aren't reaching their goal of attracting younger families.

-- I could go on and on with examples of people who try to spread God's word but don't seem to bear much fruit from their work. It's tough to believe the promise of our first reading that God's word is achieving the end for which he sent it.

-- That's particularly true in a culture like ours obsessed with numbers. We measure success by our Sunday attendance, by the number of adults brought into the Church each year, even by the size of our collections.

-- While we do need to attend to these things, our gospel seems to focus on other things which may be more important.

-- This weekend we begin a series of parables of Jesus that will extend over the next three weekends. Parables are stories, but each has a twist, an unexpected aspect.

-- Most of us are familiar with this parable of the sower. In Jesus' time, the seed was sown by hand. The ground in Palestine is not like NW Ohio. It's rocky, and there are lots of thorns and thistles. Much of the seed seems to be wasted.

-- But God's work is still done. That one quarter or so of the seed that bears fruit does so beyond all human standards. A good yield for them would have been seven, maybe tenfold at best. Jesus promises much more than that: thirty, sixty, even one hundredfold.

-- What is the lesson for us? Remain faithful in sowing the seed of faith. Don't be so worried about immediate results. God will take care of that. As Mother Teresa often said to her sisters, *Our call is not to be successful, but to be faithful.*

-- Pope Francis echoed this message when he chastised those who would refuse baptism to children of single parents or those who have issues with their marriages, provided they come in good faith.

-- God will do his work, and it will be done on God's timetable, not ours. We are challenged to trust in God's power as we continue to do his work on earth.

-- Yes, there are many obstacles to God's word in today's world, and we have to be aware of them. But we cannot be paralyzed by these challenges. And we should not be so concerned with immediate results.

-- Can we trust that God will do his work to bear fruit on his timetable? Will we continue to spread God's word and trust that it will bear the fruit that God desires?..... Yes, it is worth it.