



## **Homily - Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem**

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB  
Archbishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral, Perth  
Saturday, 19 September 2015

Some time ago a friend of mine drew my attention to a quote which he had himself found very useful as he sought to understand what God was asking of him. I would like to offer it to you this morning on this important occasion for all of us gathered here in the Cathedral.

The place God calls you to is the place where your own deep longing, and the world's deep hungers, meet.

A vocation to a particular way of life, to the place God calls you, is always a mystery. I am as some of you know a Salesian. It is a unique form of life and ministry in the Church, and it is a very valuable one - but not everyone will feel called to follow it. It is certainly a very different form of life to that lived by Trappist monks, for example, and I imagine that those who are Trappists, enclosed as they are in the silent world of their monasteries, probably couldn't think of anything worse than spending their lives working with noisy and boisterous young people. Today in this Mass we are celebrating and reflecting on the mystery of your vocation, your calling to belong to the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. This too is a form of life and ministry in the Church and again it is a very valuable one - but it is not one to which everyone will feel called or even one which all will be able to understand. Each of us is called by God to take our place, and play our part, in the rich mystery of the Church. You have been called to your own vocation, the vocation we are celebrating today.

What each form of life and each specific ministry or mission in the Church has in common is the fact that these are all pathways of discipleship, ways of living out our baptism, God-given opportunities for us to become, through our commitment and fidelity to what God has called us to, the people God has created us to be. They have been revealed to us as our unique vocation from the Lord precisely because there has been, and hopefully still is, within each of us a deep longing in our hearts which somehow corresponds to the needs of our time, the deep hungers of God's people. This call, we might say in relation to today's gospel, represents the varieties of the seed God sows in our lives, hoping that this seed will bear fruit.



This parable of the sower is very well known to us all. Often, when we reflect on it, we find ourselves focusing on the different kinds of terrain on which the seed falls. As those whom God has called to the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre, you might all reflect on what kind of soil you have shown yourselves to be in relation to the seed God has sown in your lives. Certainly you did receive the seed with enthusiasm and it has taken root and grown in your lives. But has it grown into the lush and healthy tree of faith and love that was God's dream for you? Or is it perhaps a little stunted, or drooping from lack of regular watering and care?

Another way of looking at this parable is to think of ourselves as sowers of the seed, commissioned to do so by the Lord. In what kind of soil are we sowing our seed today? How well have we tried to understand the nature of the soil in which we are called to sow our seed? And even before we reflect on that question, we might ask if we are really out there, diligently and patiently sowing the seed, as God is asking us to do. After all any vocation given by the Lord is never given just as a personal and private gift. It is always given as a gift to share with others. And so we might ask ourselves if we are as generous in our sowing as the Lord would like us to be.

Of course the wise farmer or gardener will do what he can to improve the soil before he sows the seed. And we too, as bearers of the love of God, should think hard about what we can do to make the soil of people's hearts more fertile, more ready to receive the seed and thus allow the seed to grow. In a sense we must all be like St John the Baptist going before the Lord to prepare his ways. Have we reflected on what we can do to help people open their hearts to the Lord?

As we think and pray about this we might also ask ourselves what kind of seed we are actually sowing. For each of us the seed is our words, our actions, our attitudes, our reactions, in other words the witness of our Christian lives. Am I sowing the seed the Lord has given me to sow, or have I substituted it for something else? In this sense we might remind ourselves of the instructions supposedly given by St Francis to his followers: preach the gospel always, and use words if you have to. It will be our lives, more than just our words, which will help the seed to grow.

Another way of reflecting on this is to ask ourselves a very basic question: when people encounter me do they encounter the face of Christ? Do they encounter his compassion, his understanding, his refusal to condemn, his willingness to offer himself to meet their needs. Or in Pope Francis's words, do they encounter, in me, the face of the Father's mercy?

In recent days I have offered to the whole archdiocese the proposal that we as a community of faith should think of ourselves and form ourselves into being more and more a people who walk together in the footsteps of Jesus the Good Shepherd. As this morning you gather as members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, I invite you to join me and the whole



archdiocese is this moment of renewal and recommitment to the Lord, without whom everything we do will come to nothing. Let us place him at the heart of our lives, and adore and bless him because by his holy cross he has redeemed the world.