Homily for the Fifteenth Sunday of the Year
July 16th, 2017

Isaiah 55: 10-11
Romans 8: 18-23
Matthew 13: 1-23

"Creation has its cost. To be creature, not creator, is to be incomplete, unfinished ... Thus God, in willing that there be non-god, had to will that there be frailty and incompleteness. Such is the price of creaturehood" (Kavanaugh, The Word Embodied, 85).

Yet God, who writes the poetry of the Book of Consolation, or Second Isaiah, that we hear today, warms to the incompleteness that we are, and quickens our own souls to fertility. We are enabled to love as God loves, to bring life where there was only stony, prickly silence.

For just as from the heavens
the rain and the snow come down
and do not return there
till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
giving seed to the one who sows
and bread to the one who eats,
so shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;
my word shall not return to me void,
but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it. (Isaiah 5 5: 10-11)

God will simply never give up on the earth or her people.
In the Letter to the Romans, Paul rehearses this promise of God. We groan in our incompleteness, our birth pangs, with all of creation and it seems we of all creatures know the need for deliverance. Why is it that we struggle so hard to balance our national budget? Why is it that children still die of hunger and preventable diseases? Why do our tribes - whether religious, economic, or ethnic - struggle so with largesse, with simple generosity on with world's stage? "Each of us, so consequential in history's chamber, so lost in vast spaces measured by light years, bears a power not quantified by weight and measure. The human heart, small and frail by cosmic standards, rises to heights out of its very frailty when it loves, hopes, and believes" (88).

The secret knowledge of the Kingdom of God that Jesus speaks about in today's gospel has been granted to us. To you and to me and to those who employ this secret knowledge, more of it will be given until you grow rich. But for any who eschew such wisdom, such generosity, what little they have will disappear.

What is the secret? Each of is given the seed of love. Some part of each of us is dry ground, often trampled and hardened. Some is rocky ground where there is little depth of soil; some is thorny ground where competition is brutal. But... some is deep, loamy soil where the seed takes root and grows and multiplies. Which patch of soil - of our lives - do we want to cultivate? Which do we want to use and use and find that we have more to give away!

The English Jesuit poet, Gerard Manly Hopkins put the thought this way in his sonnet:

In the Valley of the Elwy

I remember a house where all were good
To me, God knows, deserving no such thing:
Comforting smell breathed at very entering,
Fetched fresh, as I suppose, off some sweet wood.

That cordial air made those kind people a hood
All over, as a bevy of eggs the mothering wing
Will, or mild nights the new morsels of Spring:
Why, it seemed of course; seemed of right it should.

Lovely the woods, waters, meadows, combes, vales,
All the air things wear that build this world of Wales;
Only the inmate does not correspond:

God, lover of souls, swaying considerate scales,
Complete thy creature dear O where it fails,
Being mighty a master, being a father and fond.
Remember that special place, being with those who have been that mothering wing teaching us Godly love. What I remember best is about being with family sharing a meal, it was in the kitchen or sitting at the table where I learned that it is Godly to feed another human being; it is something of heaven - not metaphorically merely - but of graced life, to "breathe that comforting smell at very entering" that says "welcome, please share what we have, let us be grateful together."

"Fruitful living is how people live under the influence of the person of Jesus ... Ideas don't change us much or very deeply. The influence of the significant people in our lives changes us far beyond the power of thought. God so loved the world that God did not send an idea or a book. God rained down the grace within the Person of Jesus the Word who remains until the good Earth remembers who it is [through Earth's children]. (Gillick, Sunday Reflection)