



Immaculate Conception
Church

Homily for the 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Year A 2014

The best stories are those that are true. Such is the case with this story. There was a lonely old man named Thomas who worshipped in a small country parish. He had outlived all his friends and hardly anyone knew him. When Thomas died, there was a man in the parish who thought that there would be no one to attend Thomas' funeral, so he decided to go. He wanted to make sure that there was at least someone who would follow old Thomas to his last resting-place.

The man guessed correctly for no one else was at the funeral. It was a miserable wet day. When the funeral reached the cemetery, there was a soldier waiting at the gate. It was obvious that he was an officer but there was no way of determining his rank since his raincoat covered his badges. He followed Thomas' coffin to the gravesite and when the ceremony was over he stepped forward and before the open grave swept his hand to a salute that might have been given to a president.

The man walked away from the grave with this soldier. As they walked, the wind blew the soldier's raincoat open to reveal the rank of Brigadier General.

The General said, "You will perhaps be wondering what I am doing here. Years ago Thomas was my Sunday School teacher. I was a most misbehaved child and made life very difficult for him. But he was quite patient. And through his kindness and his example he taught me. He never knew what he did for me. But I owe everything that I am and everything that I will be to old Thomas. Today I had to come to salute him."

It has been said that most of us never know the good that we do or the seeds that we plant in other's lives. For seeds take a long time to grow and come to fruition. Unlike our culture that seeks an immediate response, the good that we do and the seeds that we plant more often than not exceed our own lifetime.

The readings today are about the planting of seeds. Both the first reading and Gospel are reflections on the power of seeds that are sown. Isaiah tells us that the seed that God plants, the Word of God that touches our lives, never returns back empty. It serves only to enrich our lives and to grow. Jesus reminds us not only of the presence of that Word but also of the generosity with which God showers each and all of our lives with that Word and the gift of God's life.

The essence of the Gospel is this: that we take the generous attention that God lavishly bestows upon each of us and learn to give it as generously to each other. That attention is given in small ways and occasionally in great ways. But I rather suspect that it is the smallest of ways, like the tiniest of seeds, that makes the most difference.

There are many, many future generals, leaders, artists, teachers and just simply good people who are waiting...waiting for us to take the generous love of God and implant it in their hearts by our kindness and our support.