



### ***The fight to remain Uniquely Exceptional.***

One of the things I do during my daily prayers is to pray for special intentions. One of those intentions is always directed to our nation's well-being, and peace. I am always asking God to heal the many divisions our country experiences. I love this country and it is my firm belief that we live in an exceptional nation. By exceptional I mean unusually good compared to other nations. To be clear... I am not saying that other nations are bad. They have their own unique goodness to them. I also am not saying that the United States is perfect... we have much we need to change and much we need to improve on. When I say we are exceptional I mean we are the standard of governance, which other peoples seek. People come to this country because of the principles we value as laid out by our founding fathers in the constitution. Those principles are LIFE, LIBERTY and the pursuit of HAPPINESS, in ONE NATION UNDER GOD. These principles are not found anywhere else in quite the way they are exercised in this country. Benjamin Franklin was right to remind us that keeping a republic based on these founding principles would not be easy.

### ***Groaning as a sign of hope.***

Today we heard Paul speak about the troubled state of the present world, which he describes as "groaning." In his time as in ours the world was chaotic and out of balance. Paul saw the "groaning" caused by this chaos as an eager longing... an indication of hope. A hope anchored in the Resurrection, which promised the happiness of the coming of the Kingdom of God and the glory of humanity.

### ***The "Prodigality" of the Sower.***

Then we hear Jesus teaching the crowd about The Kingdom of God. He tells the crowd that entrance into The Kingdom depends on the acceptance of His Word. This passage has some interesting insights...

The first is the prodigality of the sower... He spreads the seed extravagantly and without exception over all types of ground. Consider that when we plant seeds for our gardens we are very careful and particular about how and where we plant the seeds. Not so with the sower in this parable!

The second insight is that not all the seed takes root. Now we might expect this given the way and where the sower casts the seed. More important is the unstated expectation expressed by Jesus in this reality. His word is meant for everyone but he knows that not all who receive His word will accept it.

### ***Confronting a troubling reality***

Jesus discusses this insight about the sower privately with his disciples. He subtly identifies a troubling reality... the rejection of his teaching. Jesus does not doubt that his word has taken root with them... He knows they believe in him and his teachings. After all they have left everything to follow him. They have made a commitment with their lives. He also knows that they will experience the same rejection spreading his word that he has. He wants to assure them their work will bear fruit abundantly.

### ***Hardness of Heart***

The rejection of Jesus and his teaching is due to an underlying hardness of heart. This hardness is a growing "stubbornness"... a resistance to open oneself to the truth of God. This hardness is the result of the following attitudes... shallowness, arrogance and narcissism.

The shallow person, accepts the truth they like... a truth that fits their worldview. The arrogant person, values their own worldview above all else... especially Gods. They know better and are not interested in seeing things differently. The narcissist turns inward and away from truth becoming the sole authority of what is right and wrong. They make God in the image of themselves.

The hardness of heart that Jesus encountered has come home to roost in our nation. It is the cause of our groaning. It has infected our social media, our news, our politics, our institutions and our relationships with one another. We have written God out of our social, business, communal and in some cases personal lives. Once we turn from God we turn in on ourselves, and we turn against each other.

### ***So where can we look for Hope?***

Christ reinforces the reason for hope when he reminds the disciples that the seed they will sow will bear fruit abundantly. This is because they have given witness to the truth of the Gospel with their lives. Lives lived out bearing suffering joyfully, and a willingness to accept martyrdom for this truth. Living a life in love with God and His truth is attractive. It is a life of love, lived in joy and hope of future glory. It is a life lived trusting the one who can neither deceive or be deceived. Christ was their hope... He is our hope too.

### ***Hope anchored in Truth.***

Real Hope is always anchored in truth. Christ established His Church to guide us in truth. We can have faith in this truth becomes it comes from Christ. He has given us His word (The Sacred Scriptures) to inspire us. He has also given us His Church and its teachings (The Catechism of the Catholic Church) to guide us. Both the Bible and the Catechism are anchored in truth. And here is where we have an opportunity to deepen our understanding of Christ truth. Both the Bible and the Catechism require regular and constant study. They are not resources given to sound bites but rather gifts to guide and deepen our understanding through constant reflection. We must work to mine the depths of truth they reveal, and sadly most people don't approach these resources in that fashion.

### ***God provides.***

The battle to keep our nation is a spiritual battle for the soul. It is to remember that all that we hold dear and all that matters is expressed in a bigger principle from which our life, liberty, equality and happiness are derived. That bigger principle is not some abstract philosophy or an idea, it is our creator... the person who has brought everything and everyone into existence.

If “one nation under God” is to have meaning it is because God provides the material to make the earth fertile and fruitful. He gives seeds to those to sow. And His word will not return to him void, it will achieve the end for which it is sent.

***May God bless America!***