

15A SML 2017
MT 13:1-23

In last Sunday's gospel, Our Blessed Lord said:

"No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son - and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."

Knowing our Blessed Lord needs to be further defined from the popular sense of knowledge and the biblical sense of knowledge. Knowledge in the popular sense means understanding. Knowledge in the biblical sense means intimacy.

This Sunday's gospel begins Matthew Chapter 13, a definite turning-point in the ministry of Our Blessed Lord. At the beginning of His ministry, Our Blessed Lord taught in the synagogues, but beginning with Chapter 13, Jesus teaches on the seashore. This change in venue is very significant. It is not that the doors of the synagogue were as yet, finally shut to Him, but they were definitely closing. The official leaders of Judaism were now in open opposition to Him. When He entered a synagogue, it was not only to find an eager crowd of listeners, it was also to find a suspicious company of scribes, Pharisees and elders who weighed and sifted every word He spoke, in order to find a charge against Him, and watched His every move in order to turn it into a condemnation and an accusation. It was a real tragedy that Our Blessed Lord was banished from the "Church" of His day; but that did not stop Him

from teaching.

When the doors of the synagogue were closed to Our Blessed Lord, He took:

- ✓ to the temple of the open air,
- ✓ and taught men in the village streets,
- ✓ on the roads,
- ✓ by the lakeside,
- ✓ and in their own homes.

If one has a message to deliver, and a real desire to deliver it, one will always find a way to deliver it!

Considering last Sunday's gospel which contained Jesus' remarks about knowledge in the popular sense and in the biblical sense, and this Sunday's gospel about the seed as the Word of God falling on the path, the rocky ground and among the thorns, it is not hard to figure out to whom Jesus is referring – the intellectuals, the scribes, the Pharisees and the elders who weighed and sifted every word He spoke, in order to find a charge against Him. However, the disciples are the children of God, and the rich soil where the fruit produced yielded 100, or 60 or 30 fold.

So let's spend a few minutes gaining knowledge in the popular sense, with regard to the seed, which is the Word of God, in the Bible.

First question is where did the bible come from? Since the

Bible is the Word of God, then the Bible had to come from God? How? The Bible didn't just fall from the sky. Much to the ignorance of Catholics and non-Catholics alike, the Bible did not come TO the Church, the Bible came FROM the Catholic Church. Now hold on to that thought while I very briefly define the Bible.

The best way to view the Bible is as a library shelf containing 73 books: 46 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. The question is asked: why 73 books, why not 75 books, why not 70 books? The answer is twofold. Seventy-three books came to be known as the Word of God or the Bible, based on two criteria.

The first criterion to determine which books would be considered the Word of God is the answer to the question, "Which books best explain the faith?" Needless to say, a book written at the time of Jesus that claimed he was merely a man and not the Son of God would not be accepted as a book of the Bible because that book would not best explain the faith.

The second criterion is the process of deciding which books best explain the faith took place over a number of years. Now since we're all in summer mode and not in school mode, I'll spare you the details, but the archives of the Church support that in the years, 393, 397, 405, 419, 1441 and 1546, a period of over 1200 years, decisions were made by popes and bishops regarding which books

were to be included in the Bible.

Taking these two criteria into consideration, the Pope and the Bishops accepted most books of the Bible without hesitation, as most of the books of the Bible best explain the faith. Other books, however, were accepted after considerable discussion and careful deliberation. These books are called the deuterocanonical books. They are 14 in number, 7 Old Testament books and 7 New Testament Books. The OT books are:

1. 1 Maccabees
2. 2 Maccabees
3. Tobit
4. Judith
5. Wisdom
6. Sirach
7. Baruch

The NT books are:

1. Hebrews
2. Revelation
3. 2 Peter
4. James
5. 2 John
6. 3 John
7. Jude

The difference between a Catholic Bible and a Protestant Bible is the Catholic Bible contains these 14 books while the Protestant Bible does not. So when someone asks you the difference

between a Catholic Bible and a Protestant Bible, tell them ours is bigger. Even more interesting is the find at Qumran in the Holy Land as recently as 1947. What archeologists found at Qumran in 1947 was a first century ancient library. And again, I'll spare you the details, but the bottom line is the card catalog found at Qumran included these 14 books. Catholics 1, Protestants 0!

So having all of this "knowledge" in the popular sense, now what? I'm not naïve enough to think that because you have this understanding about the Bible, about the Word of God, that you will be the seed that bears fruit, 100, or 60 or 30 – fold. No. You now have a very basic understanding. We need to take it to the next level, knowledge in the biblical sense, which is intimacy, an intimate relationship with Our Blessed Lord.

How are we going to do that at St. Mary of the Lakes? Small groups: small groups of church members, parishioners, disciples, who get together in order to share faith, pray and grow closer to the Lord. St. Mary of the Lakes will start a small group campaign, entitled Christ Life. We've spent this past year training small group leaders, so this fall, we will be opening up Christ Life to the parishioners at large. I won't be asking you for a dime, I'll be asking you for your time. Time once a week, to get together in small groups in order to share faith, pray and grow closer to the Lord.

So right now, just pray about Christ Life. We will pray as a

congregation during the prayer of the faithful for Christ life. Pray that the Lord will touch your heart to put some time aside for Him.

Here are some of the responses that came from a survey of parishioners who participated in Christ Life:

1. I experienced a rejuvenation of my faith.
2. It has deepened my faith in Christ.
3. My heart is now more open to my faith and my wonderful life. I had many “Aha moments” of God and His gifts.
4. I have always had a personal relationship with Jesus but this course really challenged me to recommit myself and to get to know Jesus better and fall more in love with Him and share that love with others. This course also had a profound effect on my husband. Praise God!
5. It made me concentrate more on making Christ the center of my life.
6. I came with my parents and I was excited and felt God’s presence in discussions with them.
7. I feel like “I get more” out of Mass since I participated in Christ Life.
8. I find myself talking to and listening to God several times each day – not just saying “rote” prayers but actually entering into a dialogue.

At the end of the day, how will he describe you? How will he describe me? He was a seed. She knew her stuff. But did he bear fruit? Did she bear fruit? 100, 60, 30 fold?

It is evident that, just like Our Blessed Lord, who had a real

desire to deliver a message, and changed his venue from the synagogue to the open air, so our parish has the same real desire as Our Blessed Lord, to deliver the same message He did. It's evident that it's time, not so much to change our venue, but to expand our venue to include small groups, for that message to be taught, so as to produce fruit 100 or 60 or 30 fold.