

15A

After hearing the story of Lot's wife in the bible class - how she looked back towards Sodom and turned into a pillar of salt, a little boy put his hand up and said, 'Please Miss, when my mum was driving, she looked back and turned into a pillar box'.

There's a difference between hearing and listening to the Word of God. When I listen, the words of Christ, metaphorically speaking, 'drop from my head into my heart'. We won't understand their deeper significance if they remain only in my mind. It's like loving someone with the mind only, a kind of Platonic love, without engaging the body, or the emotions. A person who is all head and no heart would soon tire us out.

The Word of God which we listen to at Mass is an invitation with the words RSVP stamped clearly on it. If my mind is distracted with all sorts, then the words of Jesus will pass over my head. It's like someone trying to talk to you while you're texting or listening to music or reading the newspaper – it's a sort of dialogue with the deaf.

But excessive worry can also be a stumbling block to taking the Word of God on board. That's the seed which is sown among thorns that gets choked. *"Worry is like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do but never gets you anywhere"*. Scripture says 'cast all your anxieties onto to the Lord and he will support you'. Worriers like to be in control of everybody and everything, so much so that God cannot get through to their hearts. I need to let God have control of my life – He can do more with it than I can on our own.

Prayerfully listening to the Word of God will also mean that I am better able to differentiate between things of a passing nature

and those which are eternal. If our minds are too occupied with earthly things, then the Word of God may not get a look-in.

And then there are people whose faith hasn't got a great deal of depth to it. This is the seed sown on rocky ground which doesn't take root. When God tests their faith with some difficulty, they soon lose their enthusiasm for the things of God and rarely seen in church. The Word of God will only be life-giving if we take on board the full sweep of the gospel, the challenging parts as well as the easy bits.

At the end of today's gospel we see where there are many who do take the Word of God seriously - it has a real effect on how they live their lives. It finds a home in their hearts and so produces fruit, some thirty, some sixty some a hundredfold.