

15A

After hearing the story of Lot's wife in the bible class – (you remember 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 once looked back and turned into a pillar box'. (ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.)

Yes, I suppose the Word of God can spell different things for different people but it will only have life-changing effects if we can make it our own. Jesus says, 'listen anyone who has ears'. There's a difference between hearing and listening to the Word of God. When I listen, the words of Christ, figuratively 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 without engaging the body, or the emotions or the heart. That's the one who sows the seed on the edge of the path. It provides rich pickings for the Evil one.

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 trial or temptation, they soon lose their enthusiasm for the things of God. The Word of God will only be life-giving if it boosts our faith in God when faced with uphill struggles.

The Word of God proclaimed at Mass is an invitation with the words RSVP stamped clearly on it. If my mind is not properly engaged or distracted, then the words of Jesus won't elicit a response. It's like someone trying to talk to me while I'm texting or listening to music or reading the newspaper – it's a sort of 'dialogue with the deaf' – the sound is turned off.

But carrying a weight of worry on our shoulders 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'. People crippled by worry are too focussed on themselves and their petty concerns for God to get through to them. But when we become focussed on the Lord and believe in His Word our anxieties begin to melt away like the snows of winter.

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. One of things I said at Annie's funeral last week in Hale was that she was able to sus out the important things in life and didn't get worked up over unimportant things. If our minds are too occupied with transient things, then the seed of the Word will be sown in barren soil.

At the end of today's gospel we see where there are many who do take the Word of God seriously. It finds a home in their hearts and so produces fruit, some thirty, some sixty some even a hundredfold.