

## 15A

*A Christian guy named Bill saw an ad on the paper for a Christian horse, so he went to check it out. The horse's owner said, "It's easy to ride him. Just say 'Praise the Lord!' to make him go and 'Amen!' to make him stop." Bill got on the horse and said, "Praise the Lord!" and the horse broke into a gallop. Bill was enjoying his ride so much that he almost didn't notice the cliff he and the horse were about to go over. Bill shouted "AMEN!" at the top of his lungs, and the horse stopped right at the edge of the cliff. Relieved, Bill said, "Phew! Praise the Lord!"*

There's a difference between hearing and really listening to the Word of God. When I listen to the words of Christ, figuratively speaking they should, '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 and 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 us while we'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 seriously. 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 are too focussed on themselves and their petty

concerns for God to get through to them. I need to let God have control of my life – He can do more with it than I can.

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 eternally endure. If our minds are too occupied with earthly concerns, then the Word of God will hardly 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 or some trouble comes their way, their enthusiasm for the things of God soon wanes. The Word of God will only be life-giving if we take on board the full sweep of the gospel, the tough and taxing 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 noticeable effect on how they live their lives. It finds a home in their hearts and so produces fruit, some thirty, some sixty some even a hundredfold.*