FOUR KINDS OF SOIL IN OUR SOULS

Bp. Michał Stobnicki

Dear faithful, how aptly Saint Gregory the Great, the Pope, observes in his Breviary homily on today's Gospel: "The reading of the Holy Gospel which you, dearest brethren, have just heard does not require explanation but admonition. The meaning of the parable has been explained to us by the Saviour Himself." The meaning of the parable, my dear ones, which we hear on this Sexagesima Sunday. Lent is drawing near with great strides. And this parable, the reading of this parable, ought to lead us to ask ourselves the question: what kind of soil am I? Not what kind I would like to be, not what kind I imagine myself to be, but what kind I am in reality.

For, dear faithful, in us too, Catholics of Tradition, there is a whole mass of pride, a whole mass of self-love, and somewhere deep in our hearts we like to think well of ourselves. We like to think of ourselves as that fertile soil which yields an abundant harvest. And today, my dear ones, on this Sexagesima Sunday, we are called to stop living in illusions and fancies, to stand in the truth, to answer honestly for ourselves the question to which of the four kinds of soil of which the Lord Jesus speaks in the parable I belong.

HARD SOULS

The first kind comprises hard souls, souls that go to Holy Mass out of habit and recite some prayers, souls that seem to be Catholic souls but in reality are not. What is characteristic of these souls is that they always know everything better. They are not particularly concerned about the word of God, they are not particularly concerned about the Lord God, because after all they know everything best. More than to the Lord God, more than to His Church, they are attached to this or that church wall, to this or that priest, to this or that society.

And we know such people, my dear ones, we meet such people quite often. People with whom you cannot argue, with whom you cannot have a conversation. Speaking to them is like throwing peas against a wall. And even if through some crack the word of God falls into their hearts, then very soon they will prick up their ears to the quiet whisper of the devil, who constantly accompanies them: "Don't worry about it, you know better."

INCONSTANT SOULS

Next, my dear ones, the second kind of souls comprises inconstant souls. Souls that do listen to the word of God, that delight in its logic and beauty, and that under the influence of emotion are ready to make great promises and vows. Souls characterised by a certain hyperactivity. They want to be everywhere. They begin many things, but cannot bring any of them to completion. When the enthusiasm passes, when the emotions pass, when some difficulties and obstacles appear, such souls give up very quickly; they are unable to fight for anything, unable to cope with life's obstacles. And so, my dear ones, in the blink of an eye that zeal can turn into iciness. Inconstant souls, souls that are constantly searching for something new, for new impressions, new emotions, souls that wither very quickly. Why? Because they never took root, never understood Christ's religion.

SENSUAL SOULS

The third group are sensual souls. Souls that listen to the word of God but always have hundreds, thousands of excuses: "Lord Jesus, not today; maybe someday I will listen to what You are saying to me. Lord Jesus, I will change, but I will decide when and to what extent." Souls, my dear ones, that are choked by

thorns, that is, by temporal cares, always have something very important to do, something more important than the things of God. Souls that, when they have satisfied one need, chase after two further ones that have appeared, because we know this from our everyday life. Human needs are, in principle, infinite. When a man achieves something, acquires something, works something out for himself, then a second, a third, a fourth, a fifth thing appears which he would also like to have, which he would also like to possess. And so it turns out, my dear ones, that one can spend a whole life, a whole long life, chasing after temporal things. One can spend a whole life without sense, without God. And Saint John Chrysostom rightly writes: "Needless cares dull the spirit and make it heavier than lead."

SOULS COOPERATING WITH GRACE

And finally, my dear ones, the fourth group, which comprises souls that cooperate with God's grace. Souls that receive the word of God, ponder it, and, to the extent of their abilities, try to put it into practice. The fruit of cooperation with God's grace is spiritual growth, spiritual development. But this is something, my dear ones, that we forget, namely that growth needs time. We live in a world in which man wants to have everything right now, at the snap of a finger. We live in a world in which people chase after what is spectacular, after what is violent. But in the spiritual life it is quite different. This growth needs time. The soul grows in silence. The soul grows in holiness, in God's grace, in silence, in peace. In the spiritual life there is no violence; there is development. Just as a little plant that we water slowly develops and grows, so too our soul, strengthened by God's grace, little by little, day by day, grows, becomes stronger, more beautiful.

But, my dear ones, since we are so accustomed to quick results, to sudden growth, to spectacular things, then in a situation where our prayers, our efforts at spiritual growth do not bring such a spectacular, quick result, we fall into the trap of discouragement. The devil comes and convinces us that our efforts make no sense at all. Our efforts, our endeavours do not bring immediate, great, spectacular fruits. And so the devil tries to convince us that we ought to give up on all of it. He pushes us into doubt, he pushes us into spiritual despair.

And yet the Gospel reminds us: *In patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestras.* In your patience you shall possess your souls. And this is something, my dear ones, that we Catholics of today so often forget; we so often reach for some spiritual fertiliser which is supposed to bring us quick, spectacular results. Something entirely contrary to God's plan for us human beings. Look, for example, at Saint Paul the Apostle. In today's Epistle he describes his life. How much he suffered for Christ, how many hardships he endured. Look, my dear ones, at the example of so many saints, Catholic saints, who day after day, cooperating with God's grace, were transformed, grew, and bore abundant fruit, an abundant harvest.

TALKS WITH FERNÁNDEZ

We see, my dear ones, in the last several decades this advancing march of liberalism and modernism destroying Catholicism. And we see the figure of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who devoted his life to the struggle to preserve the Catholic faith, the Catholic Holy Mass, the Catholic sacraments. We see how many insults and vexations he had to endure from the post-conciliar hierarchy. We see, my dear ones, today how his legacy is being buried by the hands of the superiors of the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X.

In the last week, information reached us, an announcement, that perhaps some episcopal consecrations might take place. But very soon, my dear ones, that spell was broken. Those who let themselves be somewhat deceived by the allure of the announcement of episcopal consecrations — namely, Cardinal Fernández, an exceptionally repulsive person, an apostate — declared that these contacts with the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X most certainly exist. Talks are being conducted. This coming Thursday, a meeting of Fr. Pagliarani with Cardinal Fernández in Rome, at the seat of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. And we learn, my dear ones, from Vatican sources, that such meetings have taken place in recent months more than once. And Fr. Pagliarani, Bishop Fellay, Bishop de Galarreta made pilgrimages to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, to Fernández, in order to haggle, to haggle over episcopal consecra-

tions. And we may ask ourselves, my dear ones: what sort of horses may come out of Fernández's stable? Well, certainly they will not be Catholic champions.

STANDING IN THE TRUTH

Dear faithful, when we look at our soul in truth, it may turn out that our desires, our idea of ourselves, bear no relation to reality. When we look at our soul in truth, we may discover that which we did not want to admit until now, for perhaps we are all along hard souls, resistant to the voice of the Saviour. Perhaps we are all along Catholics, so to speak, who know everything better than the Lord God. Perhaps it is so, my dear ones, that we are all along inconstant enthusiasts, that we commit ourselves to something, but when difficulties appear, we give up, we resign. Perhaps it is so that we are all along sunk in various temporal cares, which paralyse us, which make us unable to move forward.

Perhaps it is so, my dear ones, that we are zealous Catholics, we have good will. We long to listen to the voice of the Lord God. We long to fulfil what the Lord God expects of us. But we have fallen into this satanic trap, this satanic trap of resignation, of doubt, perhaps even of spiritual despair. We must realise on this Sexagesima Sunday that God's grace can transform us, that by cooperating with God's grace we can become fertile soil which yields an abundant harvest.

If it seems to you that your prayers and your efforts are worth nothing, if it seems to you that you are no longer able to keep following the Saviour, if it seems to you that in the face of this flood of evil and Satanism you no longer have the strength to remain in Christ's religion, to resist what is evil. If it seems to you that you are alone, that all this makes no sense, then remember that the Divine Sower addresses to you too the words which He addressed to Saint Paul the Apostle: "My grace is sufficient for thee. For power is made perfect in weakness."

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Praised be Jesus Christ.