

Homily – July 12, 2026

So, I have to say that this text always reminds me of my mother. And my mother, if you ever asked her who she was, would tell you she was a dirt farmer. And that actually rang true. Most all of my uncles, five of them, owned nurseries and garden centers. And so it must have been in that family's genes, and whenever my mother saw some dirt, she knew she had to do something about it.

And so, I went to seminary in Chicago, and because that was her home, she was so excited to come and join me at seminary because she got to be the matriarch of the family and see all her nieces and nephews and their kids get confirmed and everything like that. And there was a plot of dirt in this quad in which we lived. And of course, she had to do something about it. So, she asked the maintenance people, was it okay if she planted? And they said, sure, you can plant there, but it won't do you any good. Because, you know, the kids, they don't respect anything. And their balls are going to be thrown into your plot. So, if you want to, go ahead, but you're going to waste your time and your effort and all of that.

Well, there was a plot of dirt and my mother needed to fix it. And so, she spent the fall preparing this soil for the spring. And she was ready to plant it. And I came in from classes one day and she said, we have to go and get seeds. And I'm like, okay. And I thought we were going to get seeds for this garden that she was going to plant. Didn't know. We were getting seeds for the kids. And so what her plan was is she would get all of the kids to plant some seeds along this fence, which there really wasn't much dirt, but she would get them involved in this. And then she could plant. Barry's going, good plan. And then she could plant her piece of dirt.

Well, I got to tell you her plan worked because you could hear the kids when they were playing. "Watch out, that's Grandma Marie's garden. Don't hit the ball there." And if the new kids were coming, they would bring the kids over to this plot and say, "This is Grandma Marie's and we've got to be really careful about this plot." So I asked her once, I said, do you think the seeds the kids planted is what helped them not to mess with this spot? Or do you think that they, because they built a relationship with you, they left the plot alone? And her answer in true Marie style was "Yes."

When I read this text today, I believe if I ask God, is this story about the sower or is it about the soil or is it about the seeds? I'm thinking God would say yes. First of all, we do know it is not a text about farming. So, if you came to learn about gardening today, you're going to be disappointed, because my mother did not pass the green thumbs on to her daughters. And it's also not about how to buy good seeds or not even where to plant the seeds.

As a matter of fact, one of the commentaries I read said, think about what it would be like if the sower only planted the seeds in good soil. What if the sower wasn't so generous, wasn't so grace-filled, and didn't think about abundance? What if the sower wasn't even wasteful in the way he planted the seeds? That, for me, was a new way to look at this text. Because abundance is not a topic that we hear a lot of in our society today. We speak a lot about scarcity. There's not enough money, there's not enough time, there's not enough this, there's not enough that. We can't do this because there's not enough. And we always keep worrying about not enough. And sometimes we even think *we're* not enough.

But God says, I am the sower of abundance. I've got plenty of seeds and I'm just going to throw them and they will do what they do. But remember, I am a God of abundance. Now, it's not surprising that we have an attitude of scarcity. The world invites us through ads to make you feel like you don't have this certain thing that would make your life more complete because they want you to buy that thing. Sometimes even politicians talk about that we don't have enough because they want you to vote for them so that we *will* have enough. But God comes to us today and says he is the God of abundance, the God who scatters all kinds of soil and it will do what it will do. God never holds back. God's not worried about whether there will be enough seeds. God's not worried about whether there will be enough grace, and he's certainly not worried about whether there will be enough love.

Sure, God wants our hearts to be good soil, but nevertheless, he throws the seeds knowing that God's word will take place. Jesus certainly lived out this ministry, the scattering seeds part. Think about it. All the time Jesus was being asked, why do you talk to the Pharisees? Why do you talk to the sinners? Why do you talk to... fill in the blank? I think the answer is found in Isaiah. "My words will not return empty." Jesus trusts that the words that he speaks will bring forth the kingdom of God in God's timing.

I hope you hear today that there's an abundance of God's love and mercy and grace for you and for the entire world. And because we know that and we live that, we don't have to be afraid. We can stand up against fear and scarcity. We can stand up against those things that drive prejudice and racism and greed and violence. God loves us, and we have the power to share that love through our actions, through our words, through our prayers. God is a God of abundance, and there are enough seeds for everyone. There is enough love for everyone. And please hear today that you are enough.

God will never give up on us. Even if today our soil feels really rocky, even if today our soil feels like there's thorns all around, God's love is abundant and unending. Let anyone who has ears listen, believe it, and live it. Amen.