

Sunday of the 7th Ecumenical Council - Luke 8:5-15

“... hearing the word, hold it fast in a noble and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

The Gospel today draws our attention to our own hearts. That's what a volunteer reflected on Friday when we read the Scripture together: our own heart, just as it is today, with both the good and the bad. Because it is the heart that is called to be hospitable to the Word of God.

The heart must be noble. But what does that mean? Does it mean we have to be born a certain way? Not really. Rather, nobility of heart means having integrity in loving the Word, in loving Christ, who is not a ghost, but truly has flesh and bones: *“See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”* (last Sunday's Gospel of the Resurrection, Luke 24:36–53). There is no corruption in a heart that loves Christ. It remains faithful to the love that once inflamed its being, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus. And so the heart discovers the joy of being alive, which is to know and to love the Word of God.

Nobility also means generosity: not being stingy in practicing hospitality. A noble heart gives all it has. It never counts, never checks the bill. It's like Don Quixote, in Ozzy's tattoo. A noble heart offers itself fully to the Word. It gives with a gratuity and generosity unlike any other when it comes to loving the one who has flesh and bones, the one who seeks hospitality in the heart that once felt lonely. A noble heart is foolish, because it loves beyond measure. It disregards the limits of its own capacity to care. It doesn't operate according to its own manual, because it knows it is called to be enlarged.

Patience is puzzling. How can Christ grow in us? We know that He visits us in the night, seeking to find no unrighteousness in us (Ps 17). Today we learn that He needs a home in which to grow and mature. He visits us not just to pass by, but to stay. For the Word, the discovery of righteousness is the beginning of a relationship. Because He found a broken heart, He could now enter in. And now, He asks for patience, because He is not of this world. He is not worldly.



This marks such a shift in how we understand the meaning of our lives. Today, so much of our focus is on what we must do in order to discover our vocation. Young people search for their careers to find their way. But the Gospel turns things upside down. It draws our attention to the heart that longs for a change, a transformation that unfolds over time through a relationship with the Word that we, out of foolishness, welcome in.

“What about me, my Lord?”

There was a cry this week that summons up so many other cries we hear at the mission every day. The cry of a heart where the devil came in and stole the seed. At an early age, the seed of love was meant to be the parents. But they died a violent death. And our brother, just a boy at the time, watched it happen. The heart remains lonely, not because there is nothing around it, but because it is haunted by evil spirits. Spirits that bring nothing good, that are stingy, draining the broken heart down to its very bones. How can such a heart learn to be hospitable, noble, and good, when it was taught by these spirits to hate and destroy? This heart has no trust, no memory of goodness. Because whenever it tries to remember the seed of love, it remembers the loss. And the violence that came with it. And that violence repeats itself in the present, over and over again. The Sower passed by, and the seed was stolen. Will He come again? And if He does, will the heart dare to trust that the seed might finally fall in the right place? Why does God make Himself so vulnerable to us, so fragile?

“And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold.”

It is precisely because the heart is good that the seed falls upon it again and again. But what does that mean?

This relationship requires the goodness of the heart. Yet how can that be, since only God is truly good? The goodness comes from discovering that the One who is good has entered our heart. We hear His voice, it cannot be mistaken, and we feel His hand upon our shoulders. As a volunteer said on Friday, goodness is like water and nutrients in the dirt. It nurtures and cares for the Word. There are tears when the heart draws near to the goodness of the Word. Because the heart knows it is not worthy of such goodness. But then the tears soften and sweeten the heart. Tears flow because the Word is good, and He chose a heart that seemed unworthy of Him. And now, the Word quenches the thirst of the panting hart, like a spring of fresh water (Ps 41). Because the tears are genuine, clear, fresh, each time His goodness touches the brokenness of the heart. For the one

who was alone, lost, and dead is now found and alive, forgiven and ready to forgive. Faithful to communion until the very end.

Christ asks for patience from our hearts in order to grow within us. He also asks for patience from the broken community, from His Church. The Bridegroom knows that the Bride has been betrayed, pursued by those who only pretended to imitate goodness. Just as He knows the beauty of the Bride, He also knows her suffering and how she was betrayed: *"They Struck me! They wounded me! Those watchmen on the walls took my robe from me!"* (Song of Songs 5:7)

Through time, He prepares His Church for eternal communion, where every fruit will be accounted for, and none will be lost.



"So Ruth went. She entered a field and gathered the grain left behind by the reapers" (Ruth 2:3)

The Word of God has flesh and bones. He visits us throughout our lives. It is incomprehensible to us how He can give Himself so completely, without a safety net. It is He who died on the Cross, and it is He who dies today in the broken heart of humanity. And yet, it is all so true. When we do not welcome and nurture the Word within us, life perishes, because life comes only through Him and in Him. When we close our hearts, it may seem like such a small, banal gesture, but for Him, it is death. And for us, it is grief and mourning. We cry and beat our breasts for the life that was lost when we realize what we have done (Luke 23:48).

Still, Christ offers Himself without a safety net, so that no fruit would be wasted. He takes the waste upon Himself, offering all He has so that even the fruits of death, a humanity that needs time and tears to grow, may not be lost. Not even one single grape. Because wine and bread do not come from one grain or one grape, but from many. They need to ferment and mature to be transformed and to give eternal life. So the sowing leads us to the harvest. The laborers are few, and the work is plenty. But it is at the harvest that we realize: in order for nothing to be wasted, some harvests must be poor. To gather what was left behind, what was dropped along the way. The poor, bent low, touch every grain with their hands, gathering what others have discarded. They have been humiliated, stepped over, but today, they walk behind for the sake of the one single grain.

Because the poor know the value of love. They love much because they have lost much. And it is through them that Christ harvests our hearts. The little love we have left is searched by the poor, who approach us like the publican who prays in the temple: bent over and humble. We are brought into the Kingdom by the hand of the poor, because they value even the smallest grain of love. They value and receive what little remains in us. And through them, we enter the Kingdom, because God receives, with thanksgiving, the gift of the poor, who are invited to the banquet.

Subdeacon Arsenion

Sunday of the 7th Ecumenical Council

Gospel Reading: Luke 8:5-15

A homily to be delivered on October 12, 2025 at St John the Compassionate Mission Parish

1. There are many things in this world that appear like parables. They do not announce themselves loudly; they do not demand understanding. They simply exist, quietly, waiting for hearts that will pause, watch, and listen.

The trembling of leaves in a breeze, the fragile bloom of a flower, the stillness of a cat standing and watching, the ripple of sunlight across water—each is a story, a word spoken into the world, a whisper of the unseen.

In these small moments, creation offers itself as a mirror, inviting us to perceive what lies beyond the surface, to hear the quiet voice of the Maker who weaves all things together, who spoke and brought them into existence. The world is suffused with God's presence. Not in the pantheistic sense, but as the sustaining and transcendent Lord, whose nearness gives all things being. Creation is both veil and revelation: it hides God and yet manifests Him, inviting us to behold His invisible work.

Yet creation is incomplete, waiting, groaning. As St. Paul says, “the creation waits in eager expectation for the revealing of the sons of God.” Its mountains sigh, its rivers murmur, its wind trembles— the cosmos longs for the day when humanity’s love, obedience, and freedom awaken it to fullness.

2. Everything that surrounds us is meant to be touched, offered, and sanctified for God—not as an abstract idea, but in the concrete reality of our lives. In the love we extend to family, the honesty and integrity we practice at

work, the care we show to neighbors, the unspoken attention we give to the poor and the weak, in the way we tend to animals, and in how we steward the environment—each is an offering. Each moment is an altar, each action a prayer, each breath a small participation in the unfolding of God’s eternal plan.

Such was the case with Zenas the lawyer and Apollos. Though their roles were ordinary in human terms they dedicated their gifts to God’s service. In doing so, they sanctified not only themselves but the spheres in which they lived, becoming instruments through which God’s presence could touch the world.

Their lives remind us that holiness is not confined to sacred spaces; it is revealed wherever freedom in God is exercised in love and obedience. We are the light of the world, called to illumine what others cannot see—the

hidden beauty, the truth, the presence of God woven into ordinary life. We are the salt of the earth, entrusted to preserve the world God has given us, to draw out its true flavor and reveal the goodness that lies within.

The mountains, the seas, the very air we breathe—all await the touch of sanctified hands, the voice of hearts awakened to love. For in every act of offering, the world finds its purpose renewed. When we bless, creation is

blessed; when we love, the world brightens; when we live in harmony with God, creation begins to sing.

3. Let our hands be an agency that breaks the hardened path of worldly wisdom. Let our kindness and prayer be the gentle rain that waters it with tears, softening what is rigid. Let us remove the rocks that prevent God’s

word from taking root, and clear away the thorns that strangle its growth. In all this, may we become fellow workers with God in His field, co-laborers in the cultivation of hearts and the renewal of the world. The kingdom of God is like leaven. It begins small yet spreads inevitably, transforming all it touches until all is leavened. So too, our lives, offered and sanctified, can permeate the world with God’s presence. Every act of love,

every word of truth, every choice rooted in freedom becomes a tiny seed of leaven, invisible at first, yet potent in its power to renew and sanctify. The cosmos groans, yet in our offering, creation sings. The ordinary becomes eternal. The hidden becomes revealed. And the kingdom of God, once small as leaven, spreads until all is transformed by His love. Amen

Wednesday, 6:30 pm: Bridges. Please do not forget.

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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate, "Mother Church of Christ's poor,"
under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

St. Silouan Chapel, October 12, 2025

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