

A TIME OF PRAYER

Listening, Dialogue, and Discernment: Entering the Synodal Attitudes

A meditation on the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1–9)

Introduction — Settling into Silence

Sisters and brothers in Christ from every continent,

Before we speak to one another again, let us pray together, and dispose ourselves to listen to God.

We have come from so many places and continents, and yet here we are, gathered as one body. Let us enter into prayer together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Let us ask and sing together:

Veni Sancte Spiritus, Tui amoris ignem accende. Come, Holy Spirit, kindle the fire of your love.

(We can sing together “Veni Sancte Spiritus”)

Veni Sancte Spiritus — Taizé

Veni Sancte Spiritus, Tui amoris ignem accende.

Veni Sancte Spiritus, Veni Sancte Spiritus.

Let us now begin our prayer in silence, become still, taking time to breathe and to be here in the presence of the One who gathers us all for this meeting to listen to the Holy Spirit.

(pause — 20 seconds)

Listening to Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV

Today’s challenge, as Pope Leo reminded us this past Saturday during his Pastoral Visit to Sant’Angelo Lodigiano¹, is to move toward “an effective synodality, walking united and striving together toward holiness, in the variety of gifts and ministries.”

¹Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Veneration of the Heart of Saint Frances Cabrini (Parish of Saints Anthony Abbot and Frances Cabrini, June 20, 2026)

We are gathered today to listen, to contemplate what has been sown, and to enter into fraternal dialogue and common discernment, discerning pathways for the synodal fruits that are gifts for the world².

Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV have both highlighted a deep link between synodality and peace:

““We come from every part of the world, marked by violence, by poverty, by indifference. Together, with the hope that does not disappoint, united in the love of God poured into our hearts, we can not only dream of peace but commit ourselves with all our strength so that — perhaps without speaking so much of synodality — peace may be realized through processes of listening, dialogue, and reconciliation. The synodal Church for mission now needs the words we have shared to be accompanied by deeds. And this is the path.” — *Pope Francis, 17th General Congregation, Final Greeting, Paul VI Audience Hall, Saturday, 26 October 2024*

And Pope Leo XIV, from the moment of his election: “We want to be a synodal Church, a Church that walks together, a Church that always seeks peace, that always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close, especially to those who suffer.”

Listening to the Word

Let us listen to the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, chapter 13 ; 1-9.

The Parable of the Sower

That same day, Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying:

“Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Let anyone with ears listen!”

Let us allow this Word to rest in us before I propose a few points for meditation.

(pause — 1 minute)

²“We have understood, indeed, that walking together as baptized persons, in the diversity of charisms, vocations, and ministries, is important not only for our communities, but also for the world... The world needs this witness today more than ever. As disciples of Jesus, we cannot shy away from the task of showing and transmitting to wounded humanity the love and tenderness of God.” RS 2023 (*Introduction*)

Meditation

Jesus sits by the sea. He does not stand above the crowd; he sits among them, at the same level, in the same boat that carries everyone across the same uncertain water. The Word is not thrown down from a height — it is sown among us, at eye level, in the ordinariness of a shore where ordinary people gather.

And what does he sow? Not a doctrine to be debated, not a strategy to be implemented. He sows himself — the Word of the Kingdom, a Kingdom of peace and love. And he sows it everywhere, without calculation, without first testing the ground. The sower is extravagant, almost reckless, in his generosity. He does not wait for us to become good soil before he loves us. He sows anyway. He trusts the seed more than he fears the soil.

We might ask ourselves, gathered here as those responsible for continental bodies: have we seen, in our continent, the sower sowing like this? How is Christ present among the people of our continent? What light, what seeds has he generously scattered upon our regional soils?

(pause — 30 seconds)

This parable names for us the three spiritual attitudes we are seeking to enter this week: **listening** — letting the seed touch the soil at all; **dialogue** — the real exchange between what is sown and the life already present in the ground; and **discernment** — patient attention to what soil we are, and to what, by grace, might still change.

Let us look now at the four soils as a lens through which to look back, together, on the continents and regions from which we have come. The sower has been sowing the Word of the Kingdom in every local Church, in every culture, in every synodal experience we carry within us — and the Spirit has been at work in all of these soils, differently, according to the history, the wounds, and the grace proper to each place.

The seed on the path is eaten before it can even enter the earth. Where, on my continent, have I seen the Word of the Kingdom fall on the path — spoken, but not received; offered, but lost before it could take root, drowned out by indifference, by fear, by structures too hardened to let it grow?

The seed on the rock springs up with great enthusiasm, but has no root, and withers in the heat. Where have I seen synodality welcomed with great initial joy — assemblies, consultations, beautiful documents — only to wither once the cost of real conversion appeared?

The seed among the thorns is choked — not by hostility, but by crowding. Where has a true seed of listening and dialogue been slowly strangled by poverty, war, polarisation, fear, or the sheer inertia of ecclesial life?

And then: **the good soil**. Let us also remember, and give thanks for, the good soil — where we have truly seen the Word of the Kingdom received, broken open, and made fruitful: an increase of faith, hope, and charity; reconciliation between communities once divided; a Church and society learning, even modestly, to walk together rather than against one another.

Let us hold these fruits in gratitude, for they too are part of the harvest the Sower has promised. Let us simply remain here, now, in the presence of the Sower who already knows all of this about us, and who does not condemn any of these soils, but keeps sowing anyway.

(pause — 3 minutes)

“The Kingdom of God” — Taizé
(The Kingdom of God is justice and peace)

Gathering Before the Closing Prayer

Here, the words of the Risen Christ to his frightened disciples come back to us: “Peace be with you.” That peace, as we have been reminded this year by Pope Leo XIV, is disarmed and disarming — a peace that has first laid down its own weapons of self-justification before it can disarm those around it. The Risen One gives peace first, before asking the disciples to agree. And from that gift, communion and mission become possible.

This is, perhaps, the deepest meaning of synodality for a wounded world: a school where human beings, coming from every culture, learn again to receive a word, to risk a real exchange of gifts, and to discern together where the Spirit is leading the whole Church toward reconciliation and peace.

Let us, for a last moment, hold together everything that has risen in us — our hearts as soil, our continents as fields — and offer it all to the Sower who has promised a harvest of peace.

(pause — 20 seconds)

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you who sat among the crowd by the sea, sow your Word in us again.

Make us soil that listens and welcomes with our hearts before we answer, soil that lets itself be broken open in dialogue, soil rooted deeply enough in you that our discernment together bears real fruit — thirty, sixty, a hundredfold — not for our own communities alone, but for a world that is waiting, often without knowing it, for the peace only you can give: a peace that is disarmed, and disarming.

Send your Spirit upon all of us, gathered from every continent, that together we may become what we have heard: good soil, for your Kingdom of peace.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.