Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



"The Sower" (1888) by Vincent van Gogh (Artvee)



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***Editor's note**: Welcome to Theologians' Corner, where each week a different woman theologian from around the world offers a fresh reflection on the Sunday readings.*



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15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

As we know, parables were the stories Jesus preferred to illustrate the values of the kingdom of heaven. The parable of the sower illustrates the different ways people respond to the message of the Gospel. In Matthew 13:1-23, Jesus presents four possibilities related to where the seed sown by the sower lands. One falls by the roadside, and the birds eat it. Another falls on rocky ground, and the root cannot withstand the sun's heat. Another is choked by thorns. Only the one that fell on good

soil produces fruit. The interpretation Jesus offers is simple but profound. Each of the possible places for the seed to fall represents a type of spirituality that we also find in our contemporary world.

Seeds represent the possibility of forming a relationship with God. The seeds on the path represent people who are not rooted in anything. They don't understand, nor are they interested in understanding, the mysteries of God. The ones that fall on rocky ground aren't able to grow and deepen their relationship with God. The ones that get lost among thorns get distracted by the everyday noise promoted by today's materialistic culture and, in the long run, forget to nurture their relationship with God because they lack discipline.

This parable also illustrates the life experience of women of faith who have become aware of the ways the patriarchal world has marginalized and oppressed us because of our condition as women. The reflection can be applied to any group marginalized for various reasons such as race, ethnicity, age, sexuality and functional diversity, among others.

In the case of us women, even in the 21st century, we are still denied full participation in some matters of ecclesiological and missionary nature. Men continue to hold power and carry the banner of religion. We feel oppressed in our desire to live life to the fullest, which is what the Gospel means.

I think of each of us as committed women, bearers of hope and sowers of the possibility of a more just and equitable world. On our path, we will encounter people similar to seeds that fall along the way. They don't understand, nor are they interested in understanding, and the sowing is lost. With this type of person, the status quo is perpetuated. With them, we will never achieve the equity we dream of and will never reach the privileged positions that men hold today.

We will also encounter rocky terrain where transformation will last until the demands of the new world order force it to give in. It is difficult for them to withstand the onslaught of those who do not understand the struggles to achieve justice for marginalized groups, in this case the historical struggles of women.

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We will also find thorns and burrs. These are people who know what our message is about — it seeks a full life for all women and, therefore, for society as a whole — but they are openly in total disagreement and aim to sabotage the cause until they eliminate it from many spaces. Today, we are facing a slowdown in our demands for equity and equality as daughters of God embodied within fundamentalist and far-right groups.

But also, like the sower in Jesus' parable, we must sow in good soil, and our cause will gradually, with patience, resilience and perseverance, be heard by those who do not want to listen. It will soften people lacking empathy and a sense of justice and take up spaces in places where efforts were aimed at defeating our purposes.

The call is not to give up. To keep sowing the seed of equity and equality for all humanity. As Romans 8:18-23 points out, humanity groans together with the pains of childbirth for the comprehensive liberation that must include both men and women equally and waits with hope, after being subjected to frustration by those who, like the seed that fell on the path, did not understand, or like the seed that fell on rocky ground, lasted only a little and died, or like the seed choked by thorns, did not thrive.

We wait for our good news, which was and continues to be a Gospel that announces the coming of the kingdom that is already among us, and that promises full life for all humanity, to be in the hands of women willing to sow. We hope that, as Isaiah 55:10-11 points out, our word will not return empty because we are sure that our agenda of equity and equality is backed by the values of the kingdom, which are God's desires and will.

The kingdom has come near and is already among us! Let's sow every day without giving up!

This story appears in the **Theologians' Corner** feature series. View the full series.