

(Mt13:1-9) You all remember the story of Adam and Eve. After Eve ate the forbidden fruit, she persuaded Adam to eat of it as well. In this way, Eve became the one and only partner to Adam's sin. Mother Mary in turn was Jesus' one and only partner in our salvation. She believed the good angel, Gabriel, whereas Eve believed the bad angel, Satan. Adam and Eve were the only ones responsible for the original sin. The rest of us merely inherited it at our birth. Jesus and Mary were the only ones responsible for our salvation. The rest of us merely inherited salvation at our rebirth in Baptism. Just as one man's sin caused our fall, so too did one man's cross win our salvation. From all this, you can see that Jesus and Mary are like a new Adam and Eve. The old Adam was formed, "from the dust of the ground" when the Lord God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." (See Gen2:7a) This primordial dust was still pristine, for God had not yet cursed the ground. Since the New Adam came from Mary, we can compare her to that primordial virgin soil, which did not produce thorns and thistles before the original sin even as Mother Mary is free from all sin and vice.

Seeds won't flourish unless you plant them in good soil. Planting them in clay, rocks or thorns is a huge mistake. In today's gospel, Our Lord says that you and I are like seeds. The different kinds of soil in turn stand for different kinds of devotion. Authentic devotions are so many different ways to our one goal, which is holiness. While seeds need true soil to thrive, our souls need true devotion in order to flourish spiritually. The good soil in today's parable symbolizes this true devotion. The other three devotions – symbolized in today's gospel by clay, rocks and thorns – are false. They are dead ends that don't lead to holiness. Seeds scattered on trodden clay are like souls that fail to understand the wisdom of the cross. They try to become holy without practicing mortification. Seeds planted in rock are like souls that don't have deep roots because they try to become holy without praying. Seeds planted amid thorns are like souls that devote all their time and energy to chasing after money. This leaves them no energy to practice virtue. They too are confounded in their search for holiness.

But there is also a true devotion, which includes prayer, virtue and mortification. This true devotion is an amazing shortcut to holiness. It can produce 30, 60, even 100 fold returns when compared with other devotions. As we have seen, Mother Mary can be compared to the virgin soil of primordial earth, which did not stain Adam with sin or vice. She is our true shortcut to holiness. We practice this True Devotion to Mary by wearing the Brown Scapular and praying the Holy Rosary every day. Today we honor Mother Mary's holy parents, Sts. Anne and Joachim. Of all grandparents, they were most blessed because their grandson was Jesus Christ. For this reason, they are the patron saints of grandparents. They are also the last link in a necessary chain of physical descent that leads, through King David and Father Abraham, all the way back to Adam. If the virgin soil of paradise brought forth Adam untainted by sin or vice, how much more mysterious are Joachim and Ann, the consummated soil once tainted with concupiscence, which, nevertheless, bore Mary free from all sin and vice, yet immeasurably surpassing even unspoiled Adam in grace and virtue. Sts. Joachim and Ann, Grandparents of God! Pray for us! Amen!