

SEPTEMBER 23 FATHER SALASAR

There is a story of a man who challenged his wife with a riddle.

The man began, "Just imagine you are traveling on a train, and you are the engineer of the train. There are 36 people on board. At the first stop, ten get off and two get on. At the next stop, no one gets off, but five get on. At the third stop, four get off and two get on. Now, a further question: What is the name of the engineer?"

"How should I know?" snapped the wife.

The husband continued, "I'm going to repeat. Just imagine you are traveling on a train, and you are the engineer of the train. There are 36 people on board. At the first stop, ten get off, and two get on. At the next stop, no one gets off and five get on. On the third stop, four get off and two get on. Now, a further question: What is the name of the engineer?"

The wife, as you can imagine, grew angrier and said, "How would I know the engineer's name?"

"See! You never listen," continued the husband. "Right at the start, I said you are the engineer of the train. Doesn't that sort of show how we often fail to listen carefully?"

This story illustrates the importance of listening attentively. Pay attention to how you listen, for those who have more will be given more, and from those who do not have, even what they seem to have will be taken away.

It is important to interpret this passage in continuity with what had happened before it. This passage continues directly from the parable of

the Sower and its explanation, in which Jesus highlights the fact that various sowers—meaning our hearts—receive the seed, the word of God, in various ways. Only the soil that bears fruit, the heart that obeys, has truly received the seed or the word.

Now, through the Gospel of today, Jesus takes His listeners further in their reflection by talking about the significance of light and the importance of listening carefully to His words. The imagery of a lamp is powerful; it represents not just knowledge but the active, visible faith that should shine out for others to see. The purpose of lighting a lamp is not to hide it, but to place it where it can illuminate the darkness and guide others.

Similarly, our faith, our understanding, and our relationship with God are not meant to be hidden or kept private; they are meant to be shared—to shine brightly in a world that so desperately needs light. The seed, the word, and the light we receive must be given to others.

Jesus concludes the series of parables with a warning: for those who have, more will be given. He emphasizes the principle of spiritual growth. Those who embrace God's word and nurture it in their hearts will find their faith and understanding increasing. But those who neglect it and fail to act on what they have heard will lose even the little they possess. This is a sobering reminder that spiritual complacency can lead to spiritual poverty.

In our lives, we may encounter people who have neglected their faith or abandoned it completely. If you take time to analyze, most of the time their faith is shallow to begin with. When the hardness of life—moments of difficulty in relationships, finances, or health problems—hits them hard, it is tough for them to stand firm.

They may imagine God as a genie who should grant their wishes, and if their problems are not fixed, they become in flux. They cannot maintain a relationship with God any longer, and even the little they had seems to be taken away.

Just before Mass, as I was preparing, I heard from one of the cantors who spoke about his experience in singing. He said, "If you don't use it, you lose it." This, in a way, is a reminder from Jesus that we need to continuously grow in our faith. We must grow in our trust and understanding, and only then can God truly work with us. Otherwise, we risk becoming like any other common folk who are unable to understand the work of God, and they do not grasp God's guiding hand, expecting everything to be done for them without understanding God's ways.

So, dear brothers and sisters, the liturgy of today challenges us to be attentive and responsive to the word of God. We need to listen attentively to the word that comes to us, striving to be faithful stewards of the light, allowing it to shine through us and draw others to the love and truth of Jesus Christ. The more we embrace and act on the truth we receive, the more we will be entrusted with it. For to those who have, more will be given; but from those who do not have, even what they seem to have will be taken away.