

The Distracted Heart

Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who builds his house on sand.

Words from today's Gospel.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Not long ago, I was sitting in a local restaurant and noticed a family gathering at a table nearby. It looked like a special occasion—perhaps a birthday or an anniversary. There were three generations represented: grandparents, middle-aged parents, and a couple of teenage grandchildren. It was a beautiful sight, the kind of family gathering we deeply cherish. But as I watched them, a profound sadness crept in.

From the moment they sat down until the moment their food arrived, almost no one looked at each other. The teenagers were texting. The

parents were scrolling through social media. Even the grandfather was checking his emails. They were physically present at the same table, but mentally and emotionally, they were miles apart. They were sharing a space, but they were not sharing a life. They were hearing the clinking of glasses and the ambient noise of the room, but no one was truly listening to the human beings sitting right in front of them.

This restaurant scene is a mirror of our modern world. We are more connected than ever before, yet we are profoundly lonely because we have forgotten how to listen.

Today, on this Word of God Sunday, we gather to confront this reality. For us as members of the Polish National Catholic Church, this day carries a unique, holy weight. In our theological tradition, we recognize a profound mystery: the preaching and hearing of the Word of God is considered a Sacrament.

When the Gospel is proclaimed, Christ Himself breaks the bread of His truth for us. Our Church beautifully reminds us that we must have the intentional desire to LISTEN to the Word as food for eternal life. But to

receive this food, we must first put down our distractions. We must tune out the noise of the world to hear the voice of the Lord.

The Illusion of Shallow Listening

Many of us have spent a lifetime sitting in these pews. We know the responses by heart, we can anticipate the rhythm of the Liturgy, and we love the beautiful hymns that connect us to our heritage. But a lifetime of familiarity can sometimes create a dangerous spiritual trap: the trap of hearing without listening.

There is a vast difference between a life built on a deep, listening relationship with Christ and a life built on mere spiritual routine. Jesus addresses this directly in the Gospel of Matthew. He gives us a striking, sobering warning in Matthew 7:26:

"And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand."

Think about that imagery for a moment. A house built on sand might look beautiful from the outside. It can have sturdy walls, a lovely roof, and a familiar front door. To anyone walking by, it looks perfectly fine. But its foundation is completely empty. The moment the storms rise, the wind blows, and the waters rush against it, that beautiful structure completely collapses.

Building on Sand in Mid-Life and Beyond

For those of us who are middle-aged and older, we know a thing or two about life's storms. We have lived through them. We have experienced the sudden loss of loved ones, unexpected health crises, the anxieties of aging, and the pain of seeing a rapidly changing culture that often feels alien to the values we hold dear.

When those winds blow against us, where do we turn? If our faith is built on the "sand" of mere habit—if we come to church out of a sense of empty routine rather than a living encounter with the Word—our spirits will fracture under the weight of life's hardships.

Building on sand means hearing Christ's command to love our enemies on Sunday, but allowing bitterness and old grudges to consume our hearts on Monday. It means listening to the prophets' call for charity and justice, but closing our hearts to those in need right in our own neighborhoods. It means keeping God locked away in a book or a church building, rather than allowing His living voice to direct our daily choices.

Listening as an Act of Christian Love

If we want to know what it looks like to build our house on solid rock, we have to recognize that listening is an act of holy love. It is the currency of our everyday relationships. We cannot honestly say we are listening to a God we cannot see if we refuse to listen to the flesh-and-blood people sitting right next to us.

True love requires presence, and presence requires silence. When we put our cell phones down, slide them into a pocket, and give someone our undivided attention, we are performing a sacred act. We are saying to our spouse, our child, or our friend: *"You matter to me. Your story matters. Your pain, your joy, and your presence are more important to me than the entire digital universe."*

When we listen deeply to a lonely neighbor or a fellow parishioner, we become the hands and feet of Christ. We act out the very Word we hear proclaimed from this pulpit.

The House That Stands

How do we move off the sand and onto the solid rock? It begins by reclaiming the Sacrament of the Word with radical intentionality, both in Mass and at home.

Before the scripture is read, our tradition encourages us to pray to the Holy Spirit to open our minds. When you leave this church today, extend that prayer into your

home. Intentionally create spaces of quiet. Challenge yourself to turn off the television, put the phones in another room, and sit at the dinner table to simply talk and listen to those you love.

When you truly listen to the Word of God and to one another, you begin to lay down deep foundation stones of prayer, forgiveness, humility, and sacrificial love.

When you build your life on the rock of an active, listening faith, something miraculous happens. You gain a peace that the world cannot give, and a strength that the world cannot take away. When the physical body tires, when the world around us shifts like shifting sand, the house of your soul remains completely unshakeable.

My brothers and sisters, let us not be like the foolish builder [Matthew 7:26]. Let us honor the incredible gift of God's Word by putting down our distractions, opening our ears, and loving one another through our attention. May the Holy Spirit grant us the grace to hear Christ's voice today, to welcome it into our hearts as food for our souls, and to build a lasting foundation that will stand secure for all eternity.

Praise be the Name of Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen.
