

LOSS OR GAIN?

Intent of the Fable:

This fable inspired in the Gospel text “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it will not bear fruit...” brings out the following points:

- ✓ *The meaning of suffering.*
- ✓ *An understanding of the mystery of Christ death and resurrection.*
- ✓ *The realization that without loss there is no gain.*
- ✓ *The need we have to sacrifice our immediate likes and wants in view of future gains.*

The fable.

There was a rich farmer. He owned a large field. He ploughed it, manured it and watered it with great care. The farmer bought the best seed available and began scattering it around the field with a generous hand.

At a distance, on the tree tops, some birds were watching the farmer. In bewilderment, they exclaimed: "What a fool! He is throwing away such a wonderful grain. Does he not know that good grain is for eating? What a waste!"

After he finished his work, the farmer returned to his home tired and happy. "I am sure," he said to himself, "this year I will get a bumper crop."

In the meantime, the birds gathered together and decided to salvage the seed that the prodigal farmer scattered all over the field. They said: "Not a grain should be lost."

In split second, the field was covered with birds furiously pecking the ground. Those with stronger claws made the most of it, but all had a field day! Bird-song from a thousand throats rent the air. There was chirping and singing all over the field.

Soon after, the rains came and went, the sun rose and set,, seasons rolled by; yet, the fertile soil remained barren. Only a few solitary ears of corn timidly raised their heads. The crop failed. The sweat and labor of the fanner, as well as the best seed went waste.

At harvest time, there was not a grain in the field. The birds hungry and half starved complained: What went wrong this year? There is nothing to eat, we are dying of hunger. Shall we starve to death!

Points for Reflection and Discussion

1. What does the farmer, the field and the seed stand for in the story? (*God is the farmer, the world Is the field, Christ, and we after Him, are the seed*)
2. Who the birds stand for? (*For us - naturalistic and materialistic people who want to enjoy and hate suffering and sacrifice*)

3. Can there be good crops without the best grain dying? What are the applications of this fact to our daily lives?
4. Even at the human level, can we live a full and satisfying existence in the future if we are not willing to sacrifice our immediate likes and wants in the present? Why?
5. In the context of the Gospel teachings what's the meaning of suffering? Is it fruitful or barren? How? Give examples.
6. Quote some Gospel texts where the meaning of suffering is taught, and comment on them.
7. Explain the following statements:
 - Human and spiritual growth is a progressive death to enter into a fuller life
 - Unless you scale the mountain you will not enjoy the landscape.
 - The price of joy is suffering. .
 - Through hardships, we reach the stars..
 - The way of the Gospel is to die today, to live tomorrow, whilst the way of the world is to live today, to die 'tomorrow.