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**A Theological Reflection**  
**Voice of the Faithful Leadership Meeting**  
**Indianapolis, IN**

“We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8: 22-23)

Isn't it wonderful how the assigned readings for the liturgy always seem to fit with what the assembled community is about? It is surely appropriate that all of our readings today concern themselves with planting and growing. It is, after all, that time of the year when fields and gardens are starting to bear fruit all around us. It is, for VOTF, a time for examining what we have planted and what we need to plant. But seeds (words) will not take hold unless we follow up with action. And that action will surely be accompanied by groaning as we wait for redemption. We must always be mindful that redemption comes from God's hands and not our own.

We heard in the Gospel:

“Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and be converted, and I heal them.” (Matthew 13:15) Truly this is a description of avoidance.

Chapter 13 is the middle of the gospel of Matthew. The structure of this middle chapter is 3 parables, followed by a teaching on parables, then 3 more parables; it concludes with these words: “When Jesus finished these parables, he went away from there. He came to his native place and taught the people in their synagogue. They were astonished <sup>28</sup> and said, ‘Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds? Is he not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother named Mary and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? Are not his sisters all with us? Where did this man get all this?’ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house.’ And he did not work many mighty deeds there because of their lack of faith.” (Matt: 13:26 ff.)

Will our words be met with avoidance? Will we be without honor in our own parishes, within our own Church? **Does it matter?** Let our actions reflect our words as “we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” For the redemption of our Church, let us pledge our mutual help, support, and love.