

17th Sunday homily

The kingdom of heaven is like a man who found a treasure in the field, He hides that treasure and with great joy sells all that he has sold all that he had and buys that treasure.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he finds one of great price he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.

Finding... selling ... buying.

Please repeat after me: finding...selling... buying.

Unbelievable! In three words Jesus summarizes the life of the Spirit.

First we must find. Finding!

In the two parables which Jesus gives us we see two very different ways people find out about the kingdom of heaven.

We may be like the person who finds a treasure. It may come upon us as a surprise like a man working out in a field who finds a treasure.

You know, the man or woman or youth who is just going about their daily life, working, going to school, living in a family and neighborhood... doing the every day things people do. And then suddenly they hit the lotto or fall in love. Life changes; the focus of their existence is altered; things will never be the same again.

Or maybe as with the man who finds the pearl of great price, we may have been searching our whole lives for something. We work hard for it; we save to buy the new car or a cottage, or take a Caribbean cruise. And then the day comes; it happens! and we are out of our mind with delight. Finding a treasure... it is a wonderful experience.

Why is it that fewer and fewer people seem to be finding that kingdom of heaven today? We know less people are finding the kingdom because less and less people are at peace with themselves and with others. Environmentally, we seem on a collision course to destroy nature. More people are anxious, depressed, and taking drugs to try to bring them happiness. Why is it that people cannot find a relationship with God which could give them focus in their lives, help them know that they are loved and forgiven, and will sustain them even in the midst of suffering and the certainty of death? Why is it that it is so HARD to discover that the Kingdom of God is right here in our midst?

(Pause)

Let me tell you a story. A few years ago we took the boys and girls who serve at the altar out for a picnic. Nestor Munis who does a wonderful job training them had a surprise when we got to the park. He took out a large cloth bag and began collecting their cell phones.

Well, giving up their cell phones was like cutting off their right arm!

Have you ever watched a teen with a cell phone.

I just got back from spending a few days at a cottage with my brother's family. Three of my teen age grand nieces and nephews slept in the front room. The very moment they woke up... while they were still lying in bed!... they were on their cell phones, texting friends, checking out facebook, and sending and receiving pictures about recent happenings.

And so here was Nestor at our picnic, asking the servers to give up their cell phones. Are you kidding? Well, they reluctantly did...and by the way... had a wonderful time deeply relating to each other and entering into the experience at the metro park.

Oh yes, isn't that the hard part of the spiritual life: giving up something of value to experience something greater? It may be giving up some thing, or some time, or some relationship. Oh yes, giving up is the hard part. But once we discover the joy and peace of the kingdom of God, we cannot take hold of it until we first give up something or someone.

There is a great example of the spiritual pattern of finding, giving up and buying in the story of Zaccheus, the tax collector, in Luke's gospel.

First of all, we know that Zaccheus is seeking the Lord. Many people were looking for Jesus as he passed through the town of Jericho on that fine summer day, but only Zaccheus was seeking the Lord. Only Zaccheus would let NOTHING separate himself from the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord. So he climbed a sycamore tree because he was short in stature in order to see, to see the Lord.

Now there were many people in the crowd, but only one person wanted to have his life radically changed, wanted to reinvent himself that day.

Once he looked into the eyes of Jesus, once Jesus set his sight upon Zaccheus, once Zaccheus found the treasure he was looking for, he was willing to change, to give up EVERYTHING, to repay those whom he had cheated, to walk away from his crooked way of living, to share with the poor.

And because he was willing to sell all that had, he found his treasure in the Lord that day. NOTHING would keep Zaccheus from having dinner with the one who could offer him the kingdom of God.

How can we reinvent our lives? How can we find a treasure, sell what is not any longer of use to us, and buy what our hearts seek?

We may take a page out of the business world. Today Silicon Valley is a place where people go to invest all they have to make their dreams a reality. We know the internet started in a garage out west.

We need to develop spiritual Silicon Valleys... communities where people can come, discover the great treasure of the kingdom, and invest all in order to buy it for themselves.

And I see signs of that happening in this Spiritual incubator, this Spiritual Silicon Valley called Corpus Christi.

- Bags for the poor (developed by teens from Catholic parishes throughout Detroit- thousands of bags to hand out to street people we may meet or drive by as a sign of love and concern)**
- Walking for peace in the streets of Detroit on Friday nights (nine of our members were out walking last Friday)**
- Assisting with the Saya Summer Camp for youth (month long program for youth in the community)**
- Helping to serve a meal at St. Christine Soup Kitchen (over 20 volunteers came)**

- **Supplying funds and volunteers to Found O’Hair Park Community Association (\$10,000 a year for three years; a number of parish volunteers on the organizing committee)**
- **Knowing of the quiet work of Sue Vandenberg and Sally Peck with Pax Christi, an international group who focus on world peace and non-violence. Sally received an award recently.**
- **Our young people going to Bolivia and down South in our own country to volunteer to assist others in need.**

Yes, we are an incubator for those seeking a deep and committed life in the Lord. It is out of such incubator of faith in action that we pray vocations to ministry ... to priesthood, religious life, lay ministry, family life...will emerge.

And we gather each week to hear the Good News of the Kingdom, we gain strength to “sell whatever we have” our time, our talent, our treasure, and each in our own unique way, to once again commit ourselves to the work of the kingdom.

In parables of the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price, Jesus lets us know that the spiritual life is really quite simple.

1. All we need to do is to find:

a. find the one who invites us to full life,

2. be willing to sell all we have;

a. sell anything which would stop us from total dedication to the work of the kingdom,

3. And to buy;

a. buy into the vision of the kingdom which Jesus modeled for us in his earthly life.

My brothers and sisters, just as Jesus invited Zaccheus to share a meal with him in Jericho, so does he invite us to eat and drink with him today.

Let us delight and celebrate at the table of the one who freely offers us full access to the Kingdom.