

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY OT - A

This Sunday Jesus uses three more thought-provoking images to describe the Kingdom of God.

First he tells us that the Kingdom is like a buried treasure that is found in a field.

This parable raises the question: Do I believe that my faith in Jesus is a treasure?

Am I willing to "sell all that I have" to buy that field and possess that treasure?

Or, do I see following Jesus more as a burden than a joy?

Of course, we each can feel both ways at different times in our lives.

One area of our discipleship about which I would like to challenge us is attendance at Mass.

For instance, some people - none of you - but some people might consider it a burden to have to wear a mask throughout the Liturgy and so they don't come.

And yet that seems a small price to pay for the privilege of participating in the Supper of the Lamb.

The same message comes to us through the parable of the pearl of great price.

What is my life of faith, my relationship with God, really worth to me?

What behaviors and attitudes am I willing to give up in order to follow Jesus more earnestly?

Is my participation in the Sacraments a valuable pearl for which I am willing to make whatever sacrifice might be necessary?

These parables ask us to consider how much time, treasure, and talent are we willing to invest in building up of the Kingdom of God?

Even in the midst of a pandemic ... perhaps, especially in the midst of a pandemic ...

... we are called to promote the work of evangelization ... spreading the Good News of God's love and mercy.

We are called to share the faith that St. Paul proclaims:

"We know that all things work for good for those who love God."

All things.

Even the Covid - 19 pandemic.

God is bringing good out of the current health crisis: perhaps by focusing our hearts on the things that really matter and are truly valuable.

As I have said before about the Eucharist: Hopefully, absence has made our hearts grow fonder of this great gift and irreplaceable opportunity.

Finally, there is the third parable told by Jesus in today's Gospel: the dragnet which collects all sorts of things.

This parable reminds us that everyone is invited to become part of the Kingdom of God ...

... and that there is a beautiful variety of traditions and customs in the Church.

That's the original reason why the Church is called "catholic" - a word that means 'universal.'

The diversity in the Church is not something to be feared.

The Church is meant to be like that head of a household who Jesus said is able to bring from her storeroom both the new and the old.

Like Solomon, we need to pray for wisdom - for ourselves and for our leaders - and for an understanding heart.

It's good to remember what St. Augustine wrote back in the early years of the 5th century:

"In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."