

## **HOMILY for 17<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A**

This Sunday's Gospel & Reading talk about searching for the best things & greatest treasures. As I reflect on that message, I'm reminded of this cute story about finding the best cure I'd like to share with you.

A New York retail clerk was suffering from aching feet. "It's all those years of standing," his doctor declared. "You need a vacation, sir. Go to Miami, soak your feet in the ocean & you'll feel better."

When the man got to Florida, he went into a hardware store, bought 2 large buckets & headed for the beach. "How much for 2 buckets of that sea water?" he asked the lifeguard.

"A dollar a bucket," the fellow replied with a straight face.

The clerk paid him, filled his buckets, went into his hotel room, & soaked his feet. Miraculously, they felt so much better; so he decided to repeat the treatment that afternoon. Again, he handed the lifeguard 2 dollars. The young man took the money & said, "Help yourself."

The clerk started for the water, then stopped in amazement. The tide was out. "Wow," he said, turning to the lifeguard. "Some business you got here!"

Anyhow, people might not admit it, but everyday most people go in search for what's best for their lives. They search for the best deals for food, clothes, & other basic necessities. When they've found a good deal on something, they couldn't wait to purchase it & tell others about it. They also look for the right neighborhood & best school system for their children to grow up & succeed in life. They also try to find the best treatments for their health problems especially in this Covid pandemic. Some go beyond the daily stuffs & search for spiritual things that would bring them true peace & happiness. They figure that they might have all the material things & social glamor, but could end up with a miserable life. That's why over the years many devout faithful have spent considerable amount of time & resources to search for spiritual things. They realize that what matters the most now & in the long run is their spiritual & mental well-being.

To explain more about those spiritual searches, this Sunday's Gospel wants to share with us a couple of analogies or parables & their messages. The first analogy is about a buried treasure which a person finds in a field & hides it again. Rejoicing at his finding, he sells all he has & buys that field. I don't know if you've ever bought a field, a ranch, or a home before. First, you'd have to check out the property & see if you like it. If you sense something uneasy about the property, you'd not make any offering to purchase it. On the other hand, if you find out that the property has a huge treasure buried in it gives you access to diamond, gold, precious stones, minerals, or oil; you'd be excited about that discovery & do everything possible to own it. You'd sell everything you have to purchase that hot property. You wouldn't mind exchanging what you currently own to have your hand on the hidden treasure in that land. You know that's the winning purchase! You'd be trading up for something more valuable & beneficial in the long run. That hot property would bring you a comfortable retirement & a secured future. My friends, that's how Jesus would want us to view the Kingdom of God. It is a hidden treasure waiting for us to discover & have possession of it. This treasure will bring us lots of benefits now & in the future.

The second analogy being used to talk about our spiritual search for the Kingdom of God is about a merchant searching for fine pearls. Once he finds the finest pearls, he sells all his possessions & purchase it. Clearly that pearl is rare, special, & valuable to the merchant. It's something he's been waiting for a long time. He realizes that pearl is more than a sound investment for his future. It's also a great treasure for his to own something rare in the whole world. As we talk about rare things, I'm reminded of a couple of TV shows called "The Antique Road Show" & "The Auction King Show." In both of those shows, I learn that people love to acquire & pay big bucks for anything rare & unusual. These collectors search high & low for rare & unusual things & add them to their collections. Nothing matters to them more than completing their collections. They would do like the merchant in the Gospel & doll out big bucks to acquire the rarest pearls. That's why a collector would search out & pay any price for the finest pearls & buried treasures.

Like a collector, a true believer would search out & collect spiritual things such as virtues & the Kingdom of God. This Sunday's First Reading shares with us a story of a true believer who searched for virtues like Wisdom instead of worldly things like riches or the life of one's enemies. Here's how it says, "...The Lord was pleased that Solomon made the request [for an understanding heart to judge his people & to distinguish right from wrong.] So, God said to him: 'Because you have asked for this – not for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies... I do as you requested. I give you a heart so wise & understanding that there has never been anyone like you up to now, & after you there will come no ones to equal you.'" So, Solomon wants wisdom over everything else on earth & sets a good example of true believer for future generations to imitate. Hopefully we'd do the same & ask the Lord to help us acquire virtues & the Kingdom of God instead.

My dear brothers & sisters, what are you searching for in your life? Would you want more material things, fame, & power? Or, would you like to have better access to virtues & the Kingdom of God? Hopefully our answer would be the latter. For that's where the hidden treasure is. That's where the rare pearls are waiting for us to take possession of them. So, let's begin our spiritual search for them & exchange everything we have on earth for the virtues & the Kingdom of God. When we do that, we'll have a truly happy, peaceful life here on earth & also secure for ourselves an eternal life in the Kingdom of God.