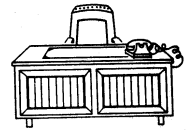


17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 26, 2020



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

The gospels the last two Sundays have been about the kingdom of heaven. In these gospels, Jesus uses parables to describe what the kingdom of God is like. Parables were very useful and efficient teaching tools in Jesus' time. In the search for truth, parables help to paint a mental picture of what is being described. They do not tell you explicitly what truth is, but enable you discover the truth by connecting the dots. Parables help to make abstract concepts concrete and comprehensible.

There are seven parables in chapter 13 of Matthew's gospel, all dealing with present and future realities of the kingdom. They are commonly referred to as the kingdom parables. Two of the parables deal with the final judgment, namely, the parable of the wheat and the weeds from last Sunday and the parable of the net from this Sunday. The other five parables, namely, the parable of the sower, mustard seed, leaven, treasure and the fine pearl, all deal with the present reality of the kingdom. The church teaches that the kingdom of God is already present but not yet fully. The fullness of the kingdom will be realized in heaven.

This Sunday's parables present God's kingdom as something of great value. Jesus describes the kingdom as a treasure buried in a field which one finds and hides again. Then, out of joy, goes and sells all one has and buys the field. This parable has the same message as that of the fine pearl of great value that a merchant finds and sells everything to buy. These parables convey the message that the kingdom of God is a great treasure that needs to be discovered and possessed. The question is: How does one discover the kingdom of God? Well, through a life of holiness and devotion to God. We discover the kingdom through friendship with God in prayer, through the scriptures, sacraments, regular Mass attendance, etc. Most of what we do as church are aimed at discovering the kingdom. Proper use of earthly treasures could lead to discovering God's hidden treasures.

It is not enough to discover hidden treasures, one must make efforts to possess them. That is the idea behind selling everything to purchase the treasure field. It is about investment and risk-taking in anticipation of tremendous reward. How do we do this? We do it through generous use of our resources, time and talent in the service of God. We invest in the hidden treasures of heaven through generous financial support of our parish and the archdiocese, volunteering our time for service projects, and supporting human concerns efforts. Those who cling to their earthly treasures may find heavenly treasures rather elusive. To one who does not understand, efforts aimed at possessing God's hidden treasures may seem wasteful.

The parable of the net towards the end of our Sunday gospel deals with final judgment. References to final judgment are often unsettling and some tip-toe around them. Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a fisherman's net which collects fishes of every kind. When the net is full, it is hauled aboard and sorted out. You do not have to be in the fishing industry to understand the imagery of sorting good fish from bad. The fishes that were discarded convey a sense of worthlessness. They are not of value to the fisherman. What a tragedy it would be to invest all of one's time and efforts on worthless ventures. Our worth at the end-time will be measured by the things we invested our time, energy and resources. We pray that when that time comes, God will find us worthy catches and invaluable gems.

Have a great week!

Fr. Romanus