

[Readings: 1 Kgs. 3:5, 7-12; Psalm 119; Romans 8:28-30; Matt 13:44-52]

In this Sunday's Gospel reading, Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God is like a buried treasure, a pearl purchased at all cost, and a net from which the bad catch of fish will be tossed away and the good catch will be valued. In other words, our Christian lives are a huge cache of valuables.

If our treasure chest has any worthless trash, the garbage needs to be tossed away to make room for more valuables. Some of our treasures have only temporary, earthly value, and ultimately they will be worthless unless they're used for the Kingdom of God. When I moved from New Baltimore to Warren six years ago, I donated or got rid of 1/3 of everything I had accumulated over the years. Now, six years later, in retrospect, I should have left behind 3/4 of my "treasures!" I could easily get by with 1/4 of what I have now!

The Reading from Romans tells us that all things work together for the good of those who love God. As we purge our lives of false pearls and dead fish, we become more like our Lord. We become more useful to the Kingdom of God.

Even the bad things that happen to us, under the creative hand of our all-powerful, mercifully loving God, get put to good use as polishing cloths that brighten our pearls and bring out from us a better shine.

In the First Reading, Solomon could have asked God for great wealth and he would have received it, but he asked for an understanding heart so that he'd have wisdom to rule the nation well. Even though he ruled imperfectly, his reputation as the wisest king on earth spread throughout the known world and he accumulated great wealth.

This is meant to teach us that when we seek first the treasures of God's Kingdom, then we can safely use the treasures of the earth, because God's wisdom guides us in using them for the benefit of his kingdom.

The more we love Christ and follow His ways, the easier it is to identify what's really valuable, separate out the junk that does not belong to God, and use everything else for his purposes. What treasures are buried within you? What pearls of wisdom have you gained, and what did it cost you to learn these? Choose one treasure, gift, or pearl that God has given to you -- something that reveals the Kingdom of God. How did you discover it or gain it? What effect does it have on others?

The Kingdom of Heaven is God's reign, the kingdom of peace and justice, of love and hope that transcends anything that the human being could establish. To inherit this Kingdom means leaving behind our own will, our own desire to conquer, to control and to possess power.

It is up to us to make Solomon's prayer our own. We must long for the wisdom to know the truth, to do that which is true, and to love the truth.

Everything else must be left behind. Everything. Our grudges, our prejudices, our agendas, some of our wealth, some of our ideas. Everything that keeps us from enjoying the beauty of the Kingdom. Jesus invites us to go on a quest for buried treasure in pursuit of a Kingdom hidden from our eyes. We'll find it buried under the surface of things, lost in the marketplace, waiting to be found at the bottom of the sea of human experience. It will take some doing to discover this Kingdom and will cost everything in our possession to acquire it.

If God made the same offer to you that He makes to Solomon, to "ask for something, anything, and it will be given to you," what would it be? What matters so much to us that we would be willing to pay a great price for it? Would wisdom and understanding make the list? Every morning when I pray, after my Prayer of Abandonment, praying for an understanding heart and for wisdom in decisions great and small are top on my list. For what in your own life have you paid a great price?

We need to pray for wisdom and understanding as we begin the process of discussion and discernment in our Archdiocese of Detroit called, "Families of Parishes." We pray that any confusion or anxiety will be replaced with certainty and courage. We are just beginning to take baby steps in this journey into the unknown. We hope and pray that the results will lead us closer to the Kingdom.

By virtue of our Baptism, we have been given the gift of the Kingdom of God in our faith. Let us journey in faith together towards that Kingdom. Even if that faith may not be perfect, and even if it is a little nicked or scratched, it is still valuable beyond measure. The appraiser is Jesus. And He is telling us that our faith is a priceless gift. That should bring us all great joy and comfort in these times of unrest. AMEN!