

A 17th Homily
July 23-24, 2011
Romans 8:28-30 and Matthew 13:44-46 (short form)

In everyday life, just about everyone has what they might call “a pearl of great price.” It’s something for which we would sacrifice much to obtain.

Think about the pearls of great price at the Festival. Some twenty-five thousand cheese puffs were made. Sometimes, the lines stretched for more than thirty yards! Every year, we hear people say they are so glad it’s cheese puff time again.

I am very grateful to *everyone*, who worked in so many ways not just at the cheese puffs but throughout the Festival to make this year’s Festival successful. Thanks for your labor of love. It was a busy time for all of us. Our parish had an unusually high number of funerals before, during, and after the festival that kept me busy. I’m glad to say that family members and friends who visited our Festival were very impressed by everything you do to make it successful.

Think about pearls of great price in the world of sports. It’s amazing how many dollars some people will pay for a big event like the Super Bowl, or how much money they’ll part with to obtain a very rare baseball card.

Think about the world of advertising. Products like beer, cars, high speed computers are all presented as pearls of great price, that is, things you’d sacrifice much for to have as your own. The list can go on and on.

Now consider today’s Gospel. What does Jesus say? What is the most important pearl of great price?

The answer is simple. Jesus says the most important pearl of great price is the kingdom of heaven.

And just what is the kingdom of heaven?

In the Book of Matthew, the kingdom of heaven is mentioned at least twenty-three times.

We are told that the kingdom of heaven is near. We need to change our lives radically (at the very root of our lives) to let it enter in. That’s a fancy way of saying we must repent to enter the kingdom of heaven.

We are told that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit (those whose ultimate trust is in God), and to those who are persecuted for the sake of justice.

We are told that the kingdom of heaven is like a buried treasure, it’s like a field in which someone plants good seed, it is like the yeast a woman puts into dough.

What is the kingdom of heaven? It is the values Jesus taught and lived, the values that He and others put into practice.

For followers of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is the pearl of great price. Perhaps this is expressed best of all by Paul in today's 2nd Reading from his Letter to the Romans: The call to be who we are truly created to be, that is, images of Jesus in all the thoughts, words, and actions of our lives.

Only Christ is the pearl of great price.

I'm looking at the stained glass window of St. Augustine, which is just to the right of the depiction of the Last Supper. Augustine was the one who taught us that our hearts are restless until they rest in God. He expressed this as a beautiful prayer:

“Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee, O Lord.”

Truly, these words remind us that Christ is everything to us and we are everything to Christ.

Ponder that: Christ is everything to us and we are everything to Christ.

As the summer moves along and our Festival has ended, may we keep this in mind. Christ **is** everything to us, and we **are** everything to Him.

Christ is the reason this parish exists (*or should be.*)

Christ is the reason we gather here (*or should be*). We come to worship the One to whom we bring our lives; we go from here bringing Him to life.

Jesus is our pearl of great price!