Homily for the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A

"The Treasure Worth Everything"

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

If God appeared to you today, just as He appeared to Solomon in our first reading, and said, **"Ask something of me and I will give it to you,"** what would you ask for?

Would you ask for better health? Financial security? A successful career? A happy marriage? Peace in your family? Perhaps you would ask for your children or grandchildren to return to the Church. Maybe you would ask for a miracle for someone you love. These are all good things. Yet Solomon surprises us.

He does not ask for wealth. He does not ask for power over his enemies. He does not ask for a long life. Instead, he asks for an understanding heart, the wisdom to know God's will and to govern God's people faithfully.

Solomon understood something that many people spend their whole lives trying to learn: if we have wisdom, everything else finds its proper place.

God is pleased with Solomon's request because Solomon is asking not for himself but for the ability to fulfill God's mission.

This is where today's Gospel begins. Jesus teaches us what true wisdom looks like. True wisdom is recognizing what is truly valuable.

Jesus tells three short parables. A man discovers a treasure hidden in a field. A merchant finds a pearl of extraordinary value. A fisherman separates good fish from bad fish.

At first glance, these seem like simple stories, but they all ask the same question: What is worth giving your life for?

Every human being is searching for treasure. Some search for money. Some search for success. Some search for recognition. Others search for love, security, pleasure, influence, or comfort.

There is nothing wrong with many of these things. God wants us to enjoy the blessings of life. The problem comes when good things become ultimate things. When we make money our treasure, we are never satisfied. When success becomes our treasure, failure destroys us. When popularity becomes our treasure, we become slaves to the opinions of others.

Only one treasure never disappoints. Jesus says that treasure is the Kingdom of Heaven.

The first man in today's Gospel is not looking for treasure. He simply discovers it.

Imagine the scene. Perhaps he is working in someone else's field. As he digs, his shovel strikes something solid. Curious, he uncovers an old chest. Inside are coins, jewels, and priceless treasures hidden many years before. Everything changes in one moment.

Notice what Jesus says next. **"Out of joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."** The key words are **"out of joy."**

He does not go home depressed. He does not complain. He does not say, **"Look what I have to give up."** He is joyful because he knows that what he is gaining is infinitely greater than what he is leaving behind. That is exactly how the Christian life works.

Many people think Christianity is mostly about giving things up. Giving up sin. Giving up selfishness. Giving up bad habits. Giving up comfort.

But Christianity is not first about losing something. It is about finding Someone.

When we discover Christ, everything else changes. The commandments no longer feel like chains. Prayer no longer feels like a burden. Serving others is no longer an obligation. Everything changes because our hearts have found their treasure.

The second man is different. He is a merchant. Unlike the farmer, he has been searching his whole life. He knows pearls. He has seen thousands of them. But one day he finds the perfect pearl. He immediately sells everything to buy it.

There are two kinds of people who come to God. Some discover Him unexpectedly. Perhaps they attend a funeral. A friend invites them to church. They experience suffering. A retreat changes their lives. They were not looking for God, but suddenly they discover Him.

Others search for years. They ask difficult questions. They study philosophy. They struggle with doubts. They seek truth in many places. Finally, they discover that all their searching has led them to Christ.

Both paths are beautiful. Whether we find God suddenly or gradually, the important thing is that once we discover Him, we recognize His incomparable value.

Some people misunderstand these parables. Jesus is not saying that every Christian must literally sell every possession. Rather, He is asking whether anything possesses us.

There is a difference between owning things and being owned by them. Money is a wonderful servant. It is a terrible master. Technology is a useful tool. It becomes dangerous when it controls our attention. Our careers are important. But they should never replace God or family.

The question is simple: If Christ asked us to let go of something that keeps us from Him, would we do it?

The rich young man in another Gospel could not. He walked away sad because his possessions possessed him.

The man in today's Gospel walks away joyful because he has found something greater.

The difference is not in what they gave up. The difference is what they loved most.

We live in a culture that constantly tells us where happiness can be found.

Advertisements tell us: **"If you buy this car..." "If you own this house..." "If you look younger..." "If you make more money..." "...then you'll finally be happy."** But after buying one thing, another advertisement tells us we need something else.

The world continually changes the definition of success. Jesus never does. His treasure never loses value. His Kingdom never goes out of style. His love never expires.

The saints discovered this. That is why they were able to smile even in suffering. Their joy did not depend on circumstances. Their joy depended on Christ.

The second reading contains one of the most comforting verses in the Bible: **"We know that all things work for good for those who love God."**

Notice carefully what Paul does not say. He does not say everything that happens is good. Cancer is not good. War is not good. Death is not good. Betrayal is not good. Divorce is not good. Sin is never good. But Paul says God can bring good from everything.

Think about Joseph in the Old Testament. His brothers sold him into slavery. Years later Joseph could tell them, **"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."**

Think of the Cross. Human beings committed the greatest crime imaginable by crucifying the Son of God. Yet from that terrible event came the salvation of the world.

If God could transform Calvary into Easter, He can transform our suffering into grace.

Many of us can look back on painful moments in our lives and see that God was quietly working even when we could not understand His plan. Sometimes we only recognize God's wisdom in hindsight.

The final parable reminds us that one day history will come to an end. A fisherman gathers every kind of fish. Then comes the separation. Good fish are kept. Bad fish are thrown away.

Jesus reminds us that life has eternal consequences. God's mercy is limitless. His forgiveness is always available. But our response matters. Every day we are becoming either more like Christ or more centered on ourselves. Every decision shapes our hearts. The Last Judgment will simply reveal what we have chosen throughout our lives.

This is not meant to frighten us. It is meant to encourage us to live intentionally.

God gives us today. Tomorrow is never guaranteed.

How do we know whether Christ is really our treasure? Jesus gives us several clues. Look at your calendar. What receives your best time? Look at your checkbook or bank statement. What receives your resources? Listen to your conversations. What do you talk about most? Pay attention to your worries. What are you most afraid of losing? Our treasure is often revealed by where our hearts naturally go.

Jesus once said, **"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."**

If Christ is our treasure, then Sunday Mass becomes the center of our week, not an interruption to it. Prayer becomes a conversation with our best friend. Confession becomes a place of healing instead of embarrassment. Serving the poor becomes a privilege. Forgiveness becomes possible. Generosity becomes natural. Not because we are forced, but because we have discovered Someone worth living for.

Every saint in history discovered the treasure hidden in the field. St. Francis of Assisi gave up wealth because he found Christ. St. Teresa of Calcutta left the security of her convent to serve the poorest of the poor because she recognized Jesus in them. St. John Vianney spent up to sixteen hours each day hearing confessions because he knew the value of one human soul.

The martyrs surrendered even their lives. From the world's perspective, they lost everything. From God's perspective, they gained everything. They remind us that nothing we give to Christ is ever truly lost.

As we leave church today, perhaps each of us should ask ourselves three simple questions.

First: What treasure am I really seeking?

Second: Is there anything in my life that I value more than my relationship with Christ?

Third: What is one concrete step I can take this week to place Christ first?

Perhaps it means spending ten minutes each day in prayer. Perhaps it means returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Perhaps it means forgiving someone who hurt us. Perhaps it means attending daily Mass once this week. Perhaps it means helping someone in need. Small decisions made with great love gradually transform our hearts.

At every Mass, something greater than the treasure hidden in the field is placed before us. The Eucharist. Hidden beneath the appearance of ordinary bread and wine is the greatest treasure on earth—Jesus Christ Himself.

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The man in the Gospel sold everything to obtain a field containing treasure. Today, Christ gives Himself freely to us. The only price He asks is our hearts.

May we pray today for the wisdom of Solomon, the joy of the man who found the treasure, and the courage of the merchant who sold everything for the pearl of great price.

Then, when our earthly journey is over, we will discover that nothing we surrendered for Christ compares with the eternal joy of possessing Him forever in the Kingdom of Heaven. **Amen.**