

# HOMILY ~ 17th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## JULY 29/30, 2023

There is a reason why lotteries and casinos are so successful. I think we have a secret or not so secret fantasy of winning the lottery or winning it big at the casino. How many of you have had a conversation with someone about what you would do with the money if you won the lottery? Sometimes we think if we just had a lot of money, all of our problems would be solved; and our lives would be a lot easier. We hear about the people who have won the lottery, and it destroyed their lives. I was reading about a man who lived in a very poor neighborhood, and he moved his family to an exclusive neighborhood into a mansion; and he and his family were miserable. They missed all of their friends from the neighborhood and just wanted to move back. Another individual won the lottery, and his family fought over the money. He is now estranged from everyone in his family. There are also the individuals who opened a restaurant. Self-employment sounds like it would be great, but it does involve long hours and hard work. If they did not know much about the restaurant business to begin with, they lost the restaurant.

In the Gospel Reading, we hear two short parables. When you find a great treasure, you do everything it takes to obtain it and keep it. When you find the pearl of great price, you sell everything you have to buy it. These are parables so they are not really about finding a buried treasure or valuable pearls. Jesus is telling the parable to teach a spiritual lesson. We all know that it is not a good idea to sell everything you have and buy lottery tickets or gamble at the casino. In fact, I think we all realize that the treasure is not money or material possessions. If you think your treasure is money or possessions, you will never have enough. You will always need more. The treasure is always God and the people in our lives.

Most of us here are Cradle Catholics, and we were baptized as children. As children, we practiced our faith because our parents shared their faith with us. It was really our parent's faith. In my family, if you were too sick to go to Mass on Sunday, you had to stay in bed in your room all day. In the olden days, there was nothing fun in the room I shared with my siblings, so I went to Mass. As we get older, there is a time when our parent's faith becomes our faith. This usually happens over a period of time. An example from my life was when I was studying for the bar exam. I took two bar review courses. I was taking practice exams, and I was not passing

them. I was getting very anxious. The Sunday before I took the exam, I decided to go to Mass. The readings spoke to me. The priest's homily had a message just for me. I had a tremendous sense of God's presence and peace. I knew that whether or not I passed the bar, it would be ok. I put all of the books away and never opened them again. I took the exam, and I passed. I knew I had a treasure in God and in my religion. I was in my 30's and that is when I became active in my Parish. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves of these experiences. They can fade over time.

Sometimes when we look at what we have, we may find that we already have the buried treasure or the pearl of great price. Sometimes we take our family and our friends for granted. These are really the treasures that we have. If you really value them, it should be reflected in how you spend your time, money and energy. What can we do to show our love for the people in our life? There is something called the *Five Love Languages*, that is also the title of a book if you want to find out more about it. I think it is fun and really helpful. Everyone has a primary *Love Language*, and this is what they are. You can probably pick yours out right away. They are: words of affirmation; quality time; receiving gifts; acts of service; and physical touch. Mine is, hands down, quality time. If you love me, I want you to spend quality time with me. I want your undivided attention. How many people here know their *Love Language*? When we want to show our love for someone, we tend to want to use our own *Love Language*. However, we need to use the recipient's *Love Language*. For example, if I want to spend quality time with you because that is my *Love Language*; and your *Love Language* is gift giving, there is a disconnect. You are waiting for the gift. We need to know the *Love Language* of the person we want to demonstrate our love for. If it is someone close to you, you may already know their *Love Language*, but it never hurts to ask. There are many ways to demonstrate your love and that is just one of them. God and the people in your life. That is the treasure. Does the way you spend your time, money and energy reflect that?

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim