

Homily for the 17th Sunday of Ordinary Time, A, July 26, 2020

As I was preparing for this homily I realized that I am excited because soon some of the major sports will begin after a long delay due to the Coronavirus. It also dawned on me how many sacrifices a *talented* athlete, male or female, has to make in order to be eligible to be chosen to become a player in any major sport, e.g. baseball, tennis, etc. When you think about it, whatever *talent* one has is actually a gift from God. What Jesus tells us today in his parables is to use one's *talent* as best as one can. I think God has made each of us unique and has given each of us our life and wants us to live our life to the fullest. By doing so we are to bring the Good News to others. How do we do this? We just become the good person God has made us to be. In living this way, let us remember our most important possession is life itself and we are to live our lives giving ourselves to others generously, even I dare say lavishly doing so.

If Jesus had lived now rather than in A.D.30 , the Gospel reading for today might have been different. Rather than talk about pearl merchants or a farmer with a buried treasure or a fisherman with his nets, Jesus might have talked about a family struggling to survive, or people trying to bring more unity among different races or even modern athletes striving to make a team? All the people in his parable had a dream and all were willing to make a sacrifice of everything they had for this goal they set for themselves. Jesus points out that to be one of his followers we need to follow that dream and be totally involved and have a total dedication and commitment to live our life to the fullest.

If I may use the example of an athlete, there is one big difference between an athlete and a dedicated Christian. An athlete has to train and follow strict discipline in order to become a professional athlete with a career *but that career will eventually end*. What Jesus

asks of us to do is *to have a commitment for our whole life*, a total commitment. The pearl merchant's prize, the farmer's treasure and the fisherman's net containing good and bad fish will all end but our goal will never end until we are with Jesus in paradise.

Another point to remember in this Gospel today is -- nothing in the world may take priority over God's Kingdom and our pursuit of it. It is a reminder to us that when we die, it is not what we have acquired in our lifetime that counts, but how we lived our life that counts. For example: did we learn to love one another? Did we learn to help the needy? Did we try to encourage the fainthearted? Did we learn to become more committed and loyal to God and to one another? Remember our most precious possession is our self and we are asked to share that self with others.

Yes, sports might return in some fashion but we especially hope that the era of the Coronavirus will soon end. We also know that the Coronavirus may be with us for a longer time than we wish. There is also a possibility that we may have to endure more suffering before things return to something akin to normal. Please let our faith give us courage. We are never alone for God is with us.