

Twenty Eighth Week of Ordinary Time
October 11, 2015

The rich man in today's Gospel couldn't let go of his many possessions, even if he got eternal life in exchange for them. How hard it is for any of us to let go! Harder than a camel squeezing through a needle's eye.

But all of this "giving up" stuff shouldn't be so hard, in fact, if we're doing it right, it should increase the joy in our lives.

I would like to share with you a small portion of one of the Amazing Parish talks that was given by Curtis Martin, who founded the FOCUS campus ministry outreach, that may help us see today's Gospel in a new and helpful light.

Mr. Martin said he'll go around asking people, "How's that Catholic thing going?" and he said their response is often like a basketball player late in the second half: "Ah, it's so hard. So hard. Always Lent!" Well, if we're walking through life and that's the way we feel and practicing our faith is a real burden, then we're probably missing something.

Now Jesus gave us seven parables on the Kingdom in Matthew chapter thirteen, but I only want to bring to your attention a short one found in verse 44. When you hear it, you'll go, "Yeah, I know that one."

But it's not enough just to know, we have to *remember* because in the decisions we have to make on a day-to-day basis, we don't always remember the

things we know. Especially as we live in a world that encourages spiritual amnesia. And when we forget who we are, we forget our mission in life.

And when we lose our mission in life, we'll never become who we were meant to be. And with all gifts and talents that you have, God created you to be amazing.

St. Catherine of Sienna said about every single one of us, "If you are what you were meant to be, you would set the world on fire."

And Jesus tells us how to do that in Matthew 13:44.

He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a man finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Now, we know that parable, we know the ingredients to finding the treasure and experiencing joy, *but we put them in the wrong order!* For most of us, like the rich young man in today's Gospel reading, we think that we have to struggle with selling all we have in order to find the treasure *and then* we'll have joy. But that's not what the parable says!

The parable says he found the treasure first! Then for joy over the treasure, he sold all that he had.

The guy in Matthew's parable isn't walking around in sackcloth and ashes wringing his hands because he hasn't sold enough stuff. The guy is probably walking around going, "Do wanna buy a watch? Seriously! Well how about a car? I'll sell you anything because here's what I know. I've already found the

treasure and I'm thrilled. And I know that all I have to do is get rid of all the stuff that keeps me from owning that field, and I win. I already won because I found the treasure!"

So if we're always feeling tired and burdened, not for a moment or two, because feelings come and go. But feeling all the time like we've run out of gas, then Matthew's parable reminds us that we already have the treasure, and we're just in the process of taking full possession of it.

Because only then will we experience our faith as Good News the same way as the guy in the parable!

And the first step in experiencing our faith as good news, is to stand before Jesus Christ and recognize God is infinite and He gave Himself to us.

There is *no way* that we, finite beings can repay that. But the appropriate response of a finite being to an infinite gift is total return. "Lord, I'm not infinite, but I give you all that I have."

And here's the beauty about the parable of the treasure in the field.

See, from Jesus' perspective, *you're* the treasure hidden in the field. And for joy over you, he went and sold all that he had.

The great truth about Christianity isn't that we love God, but that God loves us! Even on our worst day. So the appropriate response to the Gospel is to hear the good news that you are amazing.

God, infinite, blessed and perfect in Himself, in His plan of sheer goodness freely chose to create you. And that's really good news. In fact those are the very first words in the Catechism.

But then here's the bad news. Sin has entered the world and effected us and wounded us. And it's far more serious than we might think, it's a mortal wound and we can't heal ourselves.

Now, here's the great news. Jesus Christ has come and died for our sins, and he wants to restore us to a relationship with the Father of mercies. Who created each of us in a plan of sheer goodness. So there is a path back to that plan of sheer goodness.

And to receive that gift, we need to respond to the infinite gift to us by accepting Christ as the Lord of our lives. Not Oprah. Not Dr. Phil. Not our possessions or anything we think we can't do without.

Because unless we allow Jesus to be the Lord of our lives, then we can't be authentic, missionary disciples, which we are all called to be.

God isn't asking us to be a little bit better. He's asking us to be world changers. And he's given us all the sacraments and graces we need to set the world on fire.