

Dear Friends,

Inhabitants of areas around the Indian Ocean have dived for pearls for almost thousands of years. Experienced divers are able to free-dive to depths well beyond the safe limits for normal scuba divers. In Japan, for more than one thousand years, many of these divers have been women, known as “Ama” or “sea women”. These women, who also dive for food are revered even today for their courage and perseverance, though their numbers are declining. However, in most cultures diving for pearls has often been the work of poor people, and sadly the financial rewards of their efforts usually went to those who were already well off. Looking for pearls is a dangerous task, though if someone is lucky enough to find one that is valuable and be able to keep it, the effects could be life-changing.

We speak of people who possess the gift of wisdom as being able to offer “pearls of wisdom”. King Solomon, though young, in asking the Lord for a “heart to understand how to discern between good and evil,” is rewarded by God with “a heart wise and shrewd” as none before him or after him will possess. God had a purpose for Solomon: he was chosen by God to lead the people of Israel.

Each of us is uniquely called to be a son or daughter of God our Father, and we are invited to live out our Christian vocation as brothers and sisters in Christ. In comparing the kingdom of heaven to a treasure hidden in a field, or a pearl of great value, Jesus reminds us that the kingdom of heaven is both something to be sought after and something that requires wisdom and perseverance to attain. As with those who dive for pearls, those of us in search of the kingdom of heaven may find that we have a plumb depths within ourselves in search of courage, faith and a future with God as our Lord and guide. We may be called to sacrifice the lesser “treasure” or “pearls” in our lives so that we can rejoice in the greater gifts that Christ offers. Like those who sift the haul that is brought ashore by fishers or divers, our lives, our hearts and minds can be full of many things, but not all of them will lead us forward as we search for God in our lives. In fact, some of them may even be an obstacle for us in our journey towards peace, love and joy.

We might say that it requires “the wisdom of Solomon” to be able to see what is of real value in our lives. We need to seek the treasure that leads us to love God and to love one another. Jesus has promised us the kingdom of God; this is the promise to those who are poor, to those who are merciful, to peacemakers, to those who seek justice for others. In these words of Christ, we have the signposts that point us in the direction of the “treasure” of the kingdom of heaven. These are the kingdom values, and we may need to “sell” or let go of less valuable things that lay claim to our time and our way of life if we want to truly possess God’s kingdom.

Called, as we are, to be “true images” of Christ for our world, we need to choose wisely and seek the “real” treasure, which is Christ. We can, like Solomon, in prayer ask for understanding and a greater ability to judge wisely. Such gifts will engender in us a greater love and compassion for those around us. For when we understand more deeply, we can love more generously and forgive more readily.

We could wisely spend some time this week looking at what we most treasure, what is our “pearl of great value”. Let us also find time this week to appreciate and give thanks for the treasure of our faith and our family, as well as the many gifts that God has given to each one of us.

Your friend in Jesus

Msgr. Zach