



1) Opening prayer

God our Father and protector,
without you nothing is holy,
nothing has value.

Guide us to everlasting life
by helping us to use wisely
the blessings you have given to the world.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading

Jesus said to his disciples: 'The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.

'Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.

3) Reflection

- The Gospel today presents two brief parables from the discourse of the Parables. Both are similar to each other, but with significant differences to clarify better determinate aspects of the Mystery of the Kingdom, which the parables are revealing.
- Matthew 13,44: The parable of the treasure hidden in the field. Jesus tells a very simple and brief story which could happen in the life of any person. He says: The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field; someone finds it and hides it again, then he goes off with great joy, he sells everything he owns and buys the field". Jesus does not explain, he only says: "The Kingdom of Heaven is similar to a treasure hidden in a field". In this way he urges the auditors to share with others what this story has aroused in them. I share some points that are discovered: (a) The treasure, the Kingdom, is already found in the field, in life. It is hidden. We go through the field and step over the plants without being aware. (b) The man finds the treasure, just out of chance. He did not expect to find it, because he was not looking for it. (c) Seeing that it is

a question of a very important treasure, what does he do? He does what we all would do in order to take possession of the treasure. He goes and he sells everything that he has and he buys the field. And, thus, together with the field he obtains the treasure also, the Kingdom. The condition is to sell everything! (d) If the treasure, the Kingdom, is already in my life, then an important aspect of life begins to have a new value. (e) In this story, what dominates is gratuity. The treasure is found by chance, independently of our programmes. The Kingdom comes! And we must draw the consequences and not allow this moment of grace to go by without bearing fruit.

- Matthew 13,45-46: The parable of the merchant of fine pearls. The second parable is similar to the first one, but with an important difference. Let us try to discover it. The story is the following: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value, he goes off and sells everything he owns and buys it". I share some points that I have discovered: (a) it is the story of a merchant of pearls. His profession is to look for pearls. This is the only thing that he does in his life: to look for and to find pearls. Looking, he finds a pearl of great value. Here the discovery of the Kingdom is not just by chance, but it is the fruit of a long search. (b) The merchant of pearls knows the value of the pearls, because many persons would like to sell him the pearls that they find. But the merchant does not allow himself to be deceived. He knows the value of his merchandise. (c) When he finds a pearl of great value, he goes and sells everything which he owns and buys the pearl. The Kingdom is the greatest value.

- Summarizing the teaching of the two parables. Both of them have the same objective: to reveal the presence of the Kingdom, but each one reveals it in a diverse way: through the discovery of the gratuity of God's action in us, and through the effort and the search which each human being makes to discover always better, the sense of his/her life.

4) Personal questions

- A hidden treasure: have I found it sometimes? Have I sold everything in order to be able to buy it?
- To look for pearls: which is the pearl that you are looking for and you have not as yet found?

5) Concluding Prayer

I will sing of your strength,
in the morning acclaim your faithful love;
you have been a stronghold for me,
a refuge when I was in trouble. (Ps 59,16)