

## 17<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR A – 2020

Perhaps many of us here are familiar with the gospel passage in which Jesus said: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all other things that you need shall be given unto you.”

Before giving this reminder to the disciples, Jesus tells them some examples about God’s providence. God is our loving Father who cares for all of us, his children. Look at the birds of the sky. They neither sow nor reap, but God the heavenly Father feeds them all. Look at the flowers in the field. They neither toil nor spin. Yet, God clothes them all with beautiful colors; even King Solomon in all his glory is not clothed like one of these flowers. Jesus wants to assure the disciples and all of us not to worry about tomorrow, not to worry too much about collecting money or materials, but trust in God who is our loving Father who provides for us all that we need.

Once I gave a sermon on this gospel passage, after the Mass, a parishioner met me at the front door of the church and asked me a challenging question. He said: “Tell me, father, do you need money at all? You said that God provides all; let us not worry about money or material things, then why the parish always asks for money, collections, capital campaign, and archbishop annual appeal? Does not God provide for all of these things?”

I was embarrassed by these kinds of tricky questions. Anyway, this is what I told him. I firmly believe that God is caring and providing. Through these collections and campaigns, God gives those who are rich the opportunity to think about the blessings they have, so they can generously give; or they can share with those in need.

On his question about if I need money at all, I said: YES, I need money. Nobody dares to say that he or she doesn’t need money to live. But I can say: for me, money is merely the means for us to live in this world; money is not the end, nor the purpose; money is not our final goal. Nobody can bring money with him or her to the grave anyway. So, to be honest with you, I don’t worry too much about money. If I have money, I thank God, and I spend. If I don’t have money, I just live simply. I don’t worry.

Why do I bring up the theme of money, or material rich? Because the theme of today’s readings is all about what kind of treasure we should look for in this life.

It was a beautiful dream of King Solomon who succeeded his father King David to lead the people of Israel. God said, “Ask something of me and I will give it to you.” The Lord was pleased that Solomon asked for “an understanding heart” instead of for long life or riches. Solomon was granted the understanding heart, which has become well-known as wisdom of King Solomon, to rule and guide his people.

If the Lord tells you and me to ask him for something, we may ask for an easy life, or to be rich, or a wonderful family, or to have a bigger house or more money in the bank... Many things to ask for.

But for Solomon, the treasure that he looks for is not a long life for himself, not worldly richness, not temporary power, but the gift of wisdom and an understanding heart to love and to serve God and his people, and to distinguish right from wrong. You probably agree with me that health and wealth can easily be lost, but the love of God – the wisdom of God – will last forever. Solomon has chosen the best. God’s wisdom is greatest treasure.

The desire of Solomon is what characterizes the heart of the man in today’s gospel who sells all he has to buy the treasure-bearing field. This treasure-bearing field is the kingdom of heaven. This hidden treasure is Jesus himself.

We may ask ourselves: how do I see the value of Christ's presence in my life? Do I seek first the kingdom of God, above everything else? What is the driving purpose of our life: God or mammon, spiritual realm or material world? Heavenly longing or worldly ambition?

My brothers and sisters in Christ! Let the eye of our faith not be obscured by the pleasure of this passing world, but let Christ be the most precious treasure that we seek. Let Christ be our true joy, true peace, and true happiness. Let Christ be our God and our all.

### MASS INTENTIONS

*(from Sun. July 26 to Sat. August 1)*

Sunday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Thanksgiving for the benefactors of St. Mary's Church
Monday	8 a.m.	SC ...	James Phan (repose)
Tuesday	No Mass	....	...
Wednesday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Hilary Stock (healing)
Thursday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Mamita Emiliana Taaca & Family (thanksgiving)
Friday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Anthony Dinh Minh Hoang (repose)
Saturday	8 a.m.	SC ...	for Vocations (for 2 new priests – ordained today)

### FR. PHAN'S LETTER TO PARISHIONERS REGARDING PAINTING PLAN

Dear Friends of St. Mary & St. Cecilia Parish Community,

I am writing to you to give you an update on the progress in our St. Mary's Renovation project. Those of you who have driven by the church in the last few days will have seen that all the pre-painting preparation work, particularly on the south-facing wall, is now complete. We plan to begin painting this coming week once power-washing is complete.

We have made a change in our painting plans. Originally, we had planned to restore some of the original painting scheme used when the church was built in 1867. That plan called for red trim around the windows, which was a typical plan for churches built in that era. However, after much consultation, thought and prayer, I have decided to forego the red window trim and keep the window trim the same color white as the rest of the body of the building. While this may not be 'historically' correct, I am convinced that this is how you all know and have known St. Mary's for as long as you have been a part of this parish (which for some of you has been most of your lives).

Once painting is complete, and we are able to return to the church to worship, I am confident that you will agree that, refreshed and revitalized, St. Mary's will still be a beloved beacon for the faithful.

Thank you for your patience, understanding, and especially your loving support to the parish. I pray that you stay safe during this difficult time of the pandemic. In the meantime, I am looking forward to the day when we are able to come together for celebrating indoor Mass – to give thanks and praise to God. Let us keep praying for that day to come.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Fr. Ngoan Van Phan, Pastor