**17th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [27th July, 2014]**

READINGS: 1 Kings. 3:5, 7-12 / Romans 8:28-30 / Matthew 13:44-52

THEME: WHAT IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT REQUEST?

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

If God were to say to you, ‘ask what you would like me to give you’, what would be your request? [*Briefly think about your request*]. What are you thinking about? Is it long life, good health, riches, good business, the gift of miracles or healing? According to the first reading (1 Kings. 3:5, 7-12), the young King Solomon asked for none of the above. He asked for only one thing: WISDOM. And because Solomon requested for the one thing that pleased God, he was given WISDOM, as well as some extras: riches and honour.

Beloved, there is still something greater than the wisdom that King Solomon asked for. And Jesus, who is greater and wiser than Solomon (Mt. 12:42), tells us about the most important thing to pray: ‘Our Father … your kingdom come’. That is, because the **kingdom of heaven** is more important than anything else, Jesus teaches us to ask for the kingdom before we ask for our daily bread or anything else. On another occasion, Jesus makes this very clear: ‘Seek you first the **kingdom of heaven** … and all other things shall be added on to it’ (Mt. 6:33). The **kingdom of heaven** is so important that all the three parables of last Sunday’s gospel reading, those of today’s gospel reading and, indeed, most of Jesus’ parables are about it. Let us now look at the three parables in today’s gospel reading.

TREASURE THAT IS HIDDEN

**Illustration**: Many Africans see their treasure of greener pasture hidden in USA or EUROPE or CHINA. And so they are willing to sell their property (land, car, etc.) to obtain a visa and ticket to travel abroad. Similarly, Jesus says, the **kingdom of heaven** is like finding a hidden treasure and selling everything you have to buy it.

Beloved, as we hear God’s Word about His **kingdom**, we have found the TREASURE HIDDEN by Him. Let us, therefore, go and sell our worries, anxieties and fears, and buy the **kingdom of heaven** with our FAITH! Let us SEEK FIRST the **kingdom of heaven**, and God may add other things we need to it. Amen!

PEARL OF GREAT VALUE

In the days of Jesus there were merchants who travelled looking for diamonds and other precious stones; and when they found one of great value they sold their property to buy it. Thus, the parable of the pearl of great value has the same lesson as the previous parable: there is nothing of greater value than the **kingdom of heaven**.

Beloved, anyone who seeks first the **kingdom of heaven** has found the spiritual pearl, the SPIRITUAL DIAMOND, of the greatest value – no amount of money can buy it! And Jesus, the King of heaven, is the keeper and manager of this SPIRITUAL DIAMOND. The assurance is, therefore, that if we trust Him, we will never lose the DIAMOND. So, like the merchant in this parable, let us go and sell our earthly treasures and invest more in the **kingdom of heaven**!

DRAGNET

Like the parable of the wheat and weed (Last Sunday), Jesus uses the parable of the dragnet to explain the fact that there will be a day of selection for heaven, or a time in which those due for heaven shall be separated from the candidates for hell.

But then, who will be selected (as good fish) for heaven? They are those who exhibit both faith and good works. King Solomon had the faith to trust that God would bless him. Yes, God blessed him with wisdom, riches and honour. But Solomon lacked good works in the latter part of his life, and so he displeased the Lord. Beloved, I prayed that unlike Solomon, our faith will be backed by good works, so that we will be pleasing to God and live forever in His presence in heaven. Amen!