

Cell of Mary, Our Lady of Faith (reflection for August 2017)

In his Angelus address last Sunday (30th July), Pope Francis reflected on two of the parables of the kingdom in the gospel reading (from the 13th chapter of St Matthew's gospel). One concerns a man who accidentally comes across a hidden treasure in a field. As he does not own the field he has to buy it if he wants to get the treasure, and has to sell all his possessions in order to do so. The other concerns a dealer in precious stones who identifies a very valuable pearl. He is so focused on this one pearl that he sells all the rest he has in order to acquire it.

Pope Francis said, "These parables highlight two characteristics concerning the possession of the Kingdom of God: searching and sacrifice. It is true that the Kingdom of God is offered to all - it is a gift, a gift, a grace - but is not made available on a silver plate, it requires some dynamism: it involves searching, walking, engagement. The attitude of searching is the essential condition for finding; the heart must burn with the desire to attain the precious good, that is, the Kingdom of God that is present in the person of Jesus. He is the hidden treasure, he is the pearl of great value. He is the fundamental discovery, which can make a decisive turning point in our lives, filling it with meaning.

Faced with the unexpected discovery, both the farmer and the merchant realize that they have a unique opportunity which is not to be missed, so they sell everything they own. Recognizing the inestimable value of the treasure leads to a decision that involves sacrifice, detachment and renunciation. When the treasure and the pearl have been discovered, when we have found the Lord, do not let this discovery remain sterile, but sacrifice everything else for it. It is not a matter of despising the rest, but of subordinating it to Jesus, placing him in the first place. Grace first. The disciple of Christ is not one who has deprived of something essential; he is one who has found much more: he has found the full joy that only the Lord can give. It is the evangelical joy of the healed people, forgiven sinners, of the thief to whom the door of paradise is opened.

The joy of the Gospel fills the heart and the whole life of those who meet with Jesus. Those who are saved by him are freed from sin, sadness, inner void, and isolation. With Jesus Christ, the joy is always born and reborn. Today we are exhorted to contemplate the joy of the farmer and the merchant in the parables. It is the joy of each of us when we discover the closeness and the consoling presence of Jesus in our lives; a presence that transforms the heart and opens us to the needs and the acceptance of our brothers and sisters, especially the weakest.

Let us pray, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that each of us may witness, in the way we speak and act every day to the joy of having found the treasure of the Kingdom of God, that is, the love the Father has given us through Jesus."