



Immaculate Conception
Church

Homily for the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year A 2014

I had an uncle whose name was John. He was an uncle by marriage...married to my mother's sister. He and his family were immigrants from Lebanon. He was only a small child when he came to this country. They settled in Taunton, MA.

My uncle's mother was always suspicious of American ways. She was especially suspicious of banks. The home they lived in had a dirt cellar. Rather than put money in the bank, she secretly buried the money in the dirt cellar. She would tie the bills together and, without wrapping them, dig a hole and bury them in the dirt. This went on for some forty or fifty years. And in all that time, it was her well-kept secret.

When she died no one knew of this buried fortune. It was only by accident some years after her death that the family discovered nearly \$100,000 buried in the dirt floor. The tragedy was that the money had rotted away from spending so many years in the damp, dirt floor of the cellar. When they dug it up, it literally crumbled in their hands. The bank informed the family that because of its condition, it was worthless. This buried treasure had been left in the ground and thus lost its value.

One of the images that Christ uses today to teach us about the Kingdom of God is that of a treasure buried in the ground. Unlike the money that my uncle's mother hid in the ground, this treasure is meant to be discovered and cherished, used and enjoyed.

This treasure of which Christ speaks is not money. It is something much more important. It is faith. It is the gospel. It is the kingdom of God. It is the richness of God in our lives.

To understand the true meaning of this parable of the buried treasure we need to look at the other parables that are part of this longer gospel passage. Besides the buried treasure, Jesus speaks about the mustard seed, the leaven in the bread, the pearl of great price. And what Jesus is saying to us is that God's reign is not some esoteric kingdom that shall be made manifest in the world to come. Rather God's kingdom is something as close to us as the ground we walk on, the food we eat, the beautiful things of this earth and the magnificence of nature. The kingdom of God is part and parcel of our lives. It is everywhere. The challenge for us is to discover it...to dig it up, to see it for its great value, to ingest it into our lives, to find it in even the smallest part of nature. Jesus is trying to teach us that the kingdom of God is truly close at hand...it is to be found in the simple and beautiful things of life. And we, like Solomon, must seek the wisdom to discover what is so close to us and what is so important for our day-to-day living.