

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A

[1 Kings 3:5, 7-12; Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 13: 44-52]

Excerpts from Pope Francis - Angelus - 30 July 2023

by Father Charles Fillion

26 July 2026

Brothers and sisters, I always found it curious that a merchant in search of fine pearls, “on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Mt 13:46). I don’t get it. He found *one pearl of great value*. Why does he have to sell *all that he had* to buy it? Let us look a little on the actions of this merchant, who first seeks, then finds and finally buys.

The first action: to seek. He is an enterprising merchant, who does not stand still, but leaves his house and sets out in search of precious pearls. He does not say: “I am satisfied with the ones I have”; he looks for more beautiful ones. And this is an invitation to us not to close ourselves up in habit, in the mediocrity of those who are contented, but to revive desire, so that the desire to seek. To go on, is not extinguished; to cultivate dreams of good, to seek the newness of the Lord, because the Lord is not repetitive. He always brings newness, the newness of the Spirit. He always makes the realities of life new (cf. Rev 21:5). And we must have this attitude: to seek.

The merchant’s second action is to find. He is an attentive person who “has a keen eye” and knows how to recognize a pearl of great value. This is not easy. Let us think, for example, of the fascinating oriental bazaars, where the stands, filled with goods, are crowded along the walls of streets filled with people. Or of some of the markets one sees in many cities, full of books and various objects. Sometimes if one stops to look closely in these markets, one can discover treasures: precious things, rare volumes that, mixed in with everything else, one does not notice at first glance. So, it’s more than just a garage or rummage sale. But even there we can find treasures, like old antiques can be a treasure. We have people looking through things and can spot something of great value.

The merchant in the parable has a sharp eye and knows how to find, he knows how to “discern” to find the pearl. This too is a teaching for us: every day, at home, on the street, at work, on holiday, we have the possibility of seeing good. And it is important to know how to find what counts: to train ourselves to recognize the precious gems of life and to distinguish them from junk. Let us not waste time and freedom on trivial things, pastimes that leave us empty inside, while everyday life offers us the precious pearl of the encounter with God and with others! It is necessary to know how to recognize it: to discern in order to find it. And the merchant’s last action: he buys the pearl. Realizing its immense value, he sells everything, he sacrifices all his goods just to have it.

He radically changes the inventory of his warehouse; there is no longer anything other than that pearl: it is his only wealth, the meaning of his present and his future. This too is an invitation for us.

But what is this pearl for which one can renounce everything, the one of which the Lord speaks to us? This pearl is Him: it is the Lord! Seeking the Lord and finding the Lord, encountering the Lord, living with the Lord. The pearl is Jesus: He is the precious pearl of life, to be sought, found and made one's own. It is worth investing everything in him because, when one encounters Christ, life changes.

Let us return to the merchant's three actions: seeking, finding and buying — and ask ourselves some questions. Seeking: am I searching, in my life?

Do I feel fine, accomplished, do I settle for things, or do I desire more for what is more precious?

Am I in spiritual retirement? How do I continue to seek for spiritual growth?

The second action, finding: do I practise discerning what is good and comes from God, knowing how to renounce what leaves me with little or nothing?

Finally, buying: do I know how to spend myself for Jesus? Is he in first place for me, is he the greatest good in life?

It would be nice to say to him today: "Jesus, You are my greatest good". Another way of saying it is: "Jesus, you are my greatest treasure".

Brothers and sisters, may this Eucharist help us to seek, find and embrace Jesus with all of ourselves.